

**General Assembly**

Sixtieth session

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**Special Political and Decolonization Committee
(Fourth Committee)****Summary record of the 1st meeting**

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 29 September 2005, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Aliyev (Azerbaijan)**Contents**

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05-52928 (E)



The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Organization of work (A/C.4/60/1; A/C.4/60/L.1)

1. **The Chairman** drew the attention of the Committee to the relevant rules and recommendations of the General Assembly contained in the report of the General Committee (A/60/250) regarding the work of the Main Committees, including those contained in General Assembly decision 34/401 and resolutions 58/126 and 58/316. In order to make full use of the time and conference services made available to the Committee, he intended to convene and adjourn the Committee's meetings promptly, hoped that all delegations would extend their cooperation and support. In that connection, he indicated that he would convene a meeting only when there were sufficient speakers on the list for that meeting. He recalled that the Assembly had decided to continue its practice during the current session of departing from the rule that one quarter of the members must be present for a Main Committee meeting to be declared open and debate to begin.

2. On the basis of paragraph 4 of General Assembly resolution 49/221 B, he suggested that statements by members of the Committee during the general debate should not exceed 10 minutes, or 15 minutes in the case of those speaking on behalf of several delegations.

3. *It was so decided.*

4. **The Chairman** said that, in line with the time limits for explanations of vote and rights of reply, points of order should be limited to five minutes. He also recalled paragraph 17 of General Assembly decision 34/401, whereby concluding statements could be made only by presiding officers.

5. With respect to resolutions, he drew attention to paragraph 32 of decision 34/401 and to recommendation 3(f) of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts (A/41/49). In that connection, and in accordance with paragraph 5 of its resolution 48/264, the General Assembly had encouraged Member States to exercise restraint in making proposals requesting new reports of the Secretary-General, and in paragraph 69 of its resolution 57/270 B, it had requested that resolutions should be short and should focus more on action-oriented operative paragraphs.

6. With regard to programme budget implications and rule 153 of the rules of procedure, he noted that the General Assembly had drawn the attention of the Committee to paragraph 12 of its decision 34/401, which stated that it was imperative for the Main Committees to allow sufficient time for the preparation of the estimate of expenditures by the Secretariat and for its consideration by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the Fifth Committee. The Assembly had also decided that a minimum period of 48 hours should be allowed between the submission of a proposal and a vote on it involving expenditure. That period would allow the Secretary-General to prepare and present the related statement of administrative and financial implications and would help avoid the cancellation of meetings and the postponement of consideration of items.

7. He drew attention to document A/C.4/60/1, which contained a letter dated 21 September 2005, addressed to him from the President of the General Assembly, informing him that at its 17th plenary meeting the Assembly had decided to allocate 14 items to the Committee for its consideration, and document A/C.4/60/L.1, which contained the Committee's programme of work with a proposed timetable. He also drew attention to paragraph 3 (b) of section C of the annex to General Assembly resolution 58/316, according to which the Committee would, at the end of the session, adopt a provisional programme of work for the next session. The Committee had held a number of formal and informal consultations on the issue of revitalization, as a result of which a non-paper had been approved and transmitted to the President of the General Assembly in March 2005; the issue would be discussed by the ad hoc working group established by the Assembly under resolution 59/313. In accordance with the decisions taken in connection with the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly, particularly resolutions 56/509 and 58/126, the Committee would deal with agenda item 5 about three months before the next session.

8. He took it that the Committee wished to approve the programme of work and the timetable contained in document A/C.4/60/L.1.

9. *It was so decided.*

10. **The Chairman** said that, as at previous sessions, the Committee would set up a working group of the whole to prepare draft resolutions for submission under

item 29 ("International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space"). It was his understanding that the working group would be chaired by the Nigerian delegation. He took it that the Committee agreed to establish the group.

11. *It was so decided.*

12. **The Chairman** noted that, in approving its programme of work and timetable, the Committee had decided to hold one general debate covering all agenda items relating to decolonization, namely items 26, 34, 35, 36 and 37. That decision would enable Committee members to speak on any or all of the agenda items at any meeting devoted to the topic. He suggested that the deadline for submission of the draft proposals on the aforementioned decolonization agenda items should be set for Thursday, 6 October 2005, at 4 p.m.

13. *It was so decided.*

Requests for hearings (aide-mémoire 1/05)

14. **The Chairman** drew attention to aide-mémoire 1/05, which contained 49 requests for hearings on the questions of Gibraltar, Guam, New Caledonia and Western Sahara under agenda item 26. He suggested that the requests should be circulated as Committee documents for consideration at a subsequent meeting.

15. *It was so decided.*

16. **The Chairman** said that he had also received communications from the Chief Minister of Gibraltar, who wished to make a statement on the subject of Gibraltar under agenda item 26, and from a representative of the Governor of the United States Virgin Islands, who wished to make a statement under agenda item 36. The statements would be scheduled accordingly.

The meeting rose at 10 45 a.m.

**General Assembly**

Sixtieth session

Official Records

Distr.: General
20 October 2005

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**Special Political and Decolonization Committee
(Fourth Committee)****Summary record of the 2nd meeting**

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 5 October 2005 at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Aliyev (Azerbaijan)**Contents**Agenda item 26: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of
Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples*Agenda item 34: Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories transmitted
under Article 73 *e* of the Charter of the United Nations*Agenda item 35: Economic and other activities which affect the interests of the
peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories*Agenda item 36: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of
Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples by the specialized agencies and the
international institutions associated with the United Nations*Agenda item 37: Offers by Member States of study and training facilities for
inhabitants of Non-Self-Governing Territories*

Requests for hearings

* Items which the Committee has decided to consider together.

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 26: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (A/60/23 and A/60/116)

Agenda item 34: Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories transmitted under Article 73 e of the Charter of the United Nations (A/60/23, chaps. VII and XII, and A/60/69)

Agenda item 35: Economic and other activities which affect the interests of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories (A/60/23, chaps. V and XII)

Agenda item 36: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples by the specialized agencies and the international institutions associated with the United Nations (A/60/23, chaps. VI and VII, and A/60/64)

Agenda item 37: Offers by Member States of study and training facilities for inhabitants of Non-Self-Governing Territories (A/60/67)

1. **The Chairman** recalled that the cause of decolonization had been one of the defining issues of the latter part of the twentieth century. Due to the untiring efforts of the United Nations, most of the world's population was no longer under colonial rule. Nevertheless, 16 Non-Self-Governing Territories remained on the United Nations list, and he stressed the importance of completing the task of decolonization in the shortest possible time.

2. **Mr. Mekdad** (Syrian Arab Republic), speaking in his capacity as Rapporteur of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, introduced the Special Committee's report (A/60/23), which provided detailed information on the Committee's activities and projections for its future work as well as recommendations in the form of draft resolutions. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 55/146, the Special Committee had conducted a midpoint review of the implementation of the Plan of Action for the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. In that context he drew attention to the report of the Secretary-General on the Second

International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism (A/60/71 and Add.1).

3. During 2005 the Special Committee had continued to analyse developments in the 16 remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories. During its regular session in June 2005 as well as during the Caribbean seminar in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, the Special Committee had benefited from the participation of representatives from Non-Self-Governing Territories, administering Powers and non-governmental organizations, and of experts. In its report, the Special Committee stressed that the role of the administering Powers in ensuring progress towards decolonization could not be underestimated and noted the exemplary cooperation of New Zealand with regard to the self-determination of Tokelau and the continuing informal working relationships of the United Kingdom and the United States of America with the Committee. It also underlined the importance of visiting missions to the Non-Self-Governing Territories as a means of providing and collecting information on the decolonization process. In that context, he drew attention to the report of the United Nations Special Mission to Bermuda contained in document A/AC.109/2005/19.

4. **Mr. Hunte** (Saint Lucia), speaking in his capacity as Chairman of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, recalled that 2005 was the midpoint of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism and that the principle of self-determination of peoples had been reaffirmed by world leaders in the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document (A/60/L.1). During 2005 the Special Committee had stressed the urgent need for the United Nations system to move into the implementation phase of self-determination and decolonization. The support of the United Nations had been critical in achieving independence for many current Member States. That same support must be provided to the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories; accordingly, the resolutions adopted by the Special Committee set out achievable goals with the overall aim of assisting those Territories in achieving full self-government.

5. The Special Committee had taken a proactive approach to its mandate, undertaking a United Nations Special Mission to Bermuda in spring to engage in an interactive dialogue with the Bermudian people on

independence and on the potential role the United Nations could play in their development process. The 2005 Caribbean regional seminar had been held in Canouan, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, in May 2005 to discuss the situation in the various Territories with representatives of their peoples. Key recommendations for the future work of the United Nations in the self-determination and decolonization process had been adopted at that seminar and had been reflected in the resolutions proposed by the Special Committee.

6. He underscored the important role played by the specialized agencies and the international institutions associated with the United Nations in assisting the Non-Self-Governing Territories to develop their capacity to assume the responsibilities of self-government. That was in keeping with Article 73 *b* of the Charter of the United Nations on the development of self-government, which was a responsibility of both Governments and the United Nations system. He therefore welcomed the successful integration of many of the Non-Self-Governing Territories into the work of several United Nations bodies, which was helping to strengthen the territories' administrative and human resource capacity and contributing to their social, economic and political development. The Special Committee looked forward to cooperating with the Economic and Social Council to identify means of ensuring further integration of the Territories into the work of the United Nations technical bodies, including the Committees of the Council.

7. The Special Committee had benefited greatly from hearing the perspective of numerous government and non-government representatives from the Territories, some of whom would also be addressing the Committee. The Special Committee had, for example, heard the views of the elected leadership of Tokelau where, in cooperation with the administering Power, New Zealand, a detailed workplan was contributing significantly to the decolonization process. A similar workplan for the remaining Territories, pursuant to General Assembly resolutions, would accelerate the decolonization process elsewhere. He therefore strongly encouraged the other administering Powers to return to formal cooperation with the Special Committee. A true interactive dialogue would benefit all concerned, especially the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories. Active participation by the administering Powers would

accelerate the decolonization process and better prepare the peoples of the Territories to make informed decisions on their political future, in accordance with human rights instruments and Article 73, paragraph *b* and *a* of the Charter of the United Nations.

8. The entire United Nations system shared the responsibility for decolonization; accordingly, a plan for the wider United Nations system had been developed to ensure the implementation of long-standing directives with a view to achieving decolonization by 2010. Areas where independent expertise was crucial if decolonization were to become a reality had been identified. That proactive approach must be carried forward into 2006 in order to achieve full decolonization by 2010. By focusing its efforts on implementation, the Special Committee had created a new dynamic and he was sure that, with the support of Member States, the challenge of implementation could be met.

9. **Mr. Williams** (United Kingdom) said the consultation process between his Government and its 10 overseas territories was continuing. The seventh annual meeting of the Overseas Territories Consultative Council would be held in London in October 2005. The Council provided a forum for dialogue between democratically elected chief ministers and their equivalents from the Territories and United Kingdom Government Ministers on a range of issues including the relationship between the United Kingdom and its overseas Territories, constitutional modernization, good governance, environmental matters and the United Kingdom's international obligations.

10. His Government welcomed the progress that was being made in the constitutional review process; there had been useful discussions between his Government and representatives of Gibraltar, Montserrat and the Turks and Caicos Islands. In Saint Helena, a consultative poll had rejected a revised draft constitution and that Territory was currently considering its next steps. Extensive discussions had been held with the Independence Commission set up in Bermuda to look into the implications of any move towards independence; at the Commission's request, his Government had drafted a paper setting out its position on a number of issues, which was currently being studied by the Government of Bermuda.

11. His Government continued to support capacity-building projects and to promote sustainable development and good governance in its overseas Territories. The Overseas Territories Environment Programme continued to support the implementation of the environment charters for the overseas Territories. His Government likewise continued to support its overseas Territories in their efforts to strengthen relations with the European Commission and to improve access to the trade and economic and developmental aid provisions of the European Union — Overseas Countries and Territories (EU — OCT) Overseas Association Decision. It had also continued its informal cooperation with the Special Committee; in that context a visit had been made to Bermuda with a view to consider progress towards that Territory's delisting.

12. **Mr. Xie Yunliang** (China) said that helping colonial countries and peoples exercise their right to self-determination had been one of the cardinal goals and greatest successes of the United Nations in its 60-year history. The historic Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples had accelerated decolonization across the world, yet 2 million people still lived in 16 Non-Self-Governing Territories. The declaration by the General Assembly of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism had reflected the common aspiration of Member States for an early conclusion of the decolonization process.

13. Member States had a duty to help the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories exercise their inalienable right to self-determination in accordance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the Declaration. He stressed the role played by the Committee in that regard and underscored the need for closer cooperation between the administering Powers and the United Nations. Given that most of the Non-Self-Governing Territories were small and had very fragile development environments, he called on the administering Powers to take effective measures to promote their economic, social, cultural and educational development while at the same time protecting natural and human resources.

14. **Ms. Mujuma** (United Republic of Tanzania) said that it was the duty of Member States to facilitate the decolonization of the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories by redoubling their efforts on a case-by-case basis. Regional seminars continued to create an

understanding among the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories of the options for self-determination. The 2005 Caribbean Regional Seminar had been a success; her delegation encouraged the continuation of such seminars. Visiting Missions remained an important mechanism for consultations and the dissemination of information, and her delegation appealed to the administering Powers to cooperate with them. Dissemination of information on decolonization was equally vital; the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Public Information had been doing a commendable job. Specialized agencies and organizations should be encouraged to further assist those Territories in the economic and social sectors.

15. The question of Western Sahara could be resolved only on the basis of the inalienable rights of the Saharan people to self-determination. Sadly, the situation remained critical. Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO, signatories to the agreement reached with the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), had both violated the ceasefire, further complicating the situation. The two parties should urgently implement the Baker Plan. Continued violations of human rights were of concern and her delegation urged both the Saharan Government and Morocco to release all prisoners of war and political prisoners. The appointment of a new Personal Envoy for Western Sahara was a hopeful step towards resuscitating the stalled negotiating process.

16. All options for self-determination of the Territories were valid as long as they conformed with the freely expressed wishes of the peoples concerned and the relevant United Nations resolutions. The task of ensuring the independence of the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories would be difficult without practical support from administering Powers, the international community and institutions at large.

17. **Ms. Núñez Mordoché** (Cuba) said that although the United Nations had always considered the decolonization process among its main achievements, progress had unfortunately been very limited in recent years. Indeed, during the preparation of the final document for the High-Level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly, fundamental rights such as the inalienable right of peoples to self-determination, and even the very existence of the Fourth Committee, had been called into question.

18. Some administering Powers refused to seek a definitive solution to colonialism, citing the alleged inability of Non-Self-Governing Territories to maintain an independent and sustainable society and still refused to cooperate fully with the Special Committee, even attempting to delist their colonies without adequately informing inhabitants of the various options for self-determination. Her delegation reiterated that delisting Territories must be part of a process of real decolonization, in which the inhabitants of Non-Self-Governing Territories were afforded full guarantees and all the necessary information to reach an outcome based on a transparent and just decision.

19. In that context, visiting missions were of paramount importance in collecting information on the living conditions of the inhabitants of such Territories, as well as in disseminating information on their options for self-determination. For example, the special mission to Bermuda in 2005 had provided member States with first-hand insight into the real problems of that Territory and their influence on the self-determination process. Similar visits had helped lead to the pending resolution of the Tokelau case. Cuba wished to acknowledge New Zealand's cooperative and open stance and urged other administering Powers to follow that example. Cuba was, however, concerned about the continuing looting and overexploitation of the land and sea resources of Non-Self-Governing Territories.

20. Decolonization must remain a priority for the United Nations. Regional seminars were vital and should be complemented by dissemination of their outcomes on the Internet and through the mass media of Member States. Furthermore, more developed Member States should make a greater contribution to the provision of educational and training opportunities for the youth of Non-Self-Governing Territories.

21. A number of resolutions had been adopted recognizing the inalienable right of the Puerto Rican people to self-determination and independence, including the resolution submitted by Cuba in June 2005 to the Special Committee. Still pending however, were the decontamination of the island of Vieques and the devolution of a former shooting range to the local authorities.

22. The stalemate in the Western Sahara was of grave concern; the only feasible way to reach an honourable solution would be to hold a fair and transparent

referendum under the aegis of the United Nations. Her delegation reaffirmed its support for the right of the Saharan people to self-determination and demanded firm action from the United Nations. It also reiterated its unqualified support to the legitimate rights of Argentina in the dispute over the Malvinas Islands and called for the continuation of dialogue and cooperation between the parties with a view to a just, peaceful and honourable solution. Her delegation urged the administering Power for Guam to cooperate fully with the Committee and respect the inalienable rights and genuine interests of the inhabitants of the Territory.

23. **Mr. Mcivor** (New Zealand) recalled that in June 2005, the Administrator of Tokelau had reported to the Special Committee that work was under way on a constitution and a treaty of free association with New Zealand, that measures to strengthen Tokelau's infrastructure continued apace, and that New Zealand had announced an additional contribution of NZ\$ 7.5 million to the Tokelau International Trust Fund. Tokelau continued to move steadily towards a decision on self-government. In August 2005, the General Fono had agreed to hold a referendum on self-government, enacted a set of rules for the referendum, and authorized the Council for Ongoing Government to negotiate a final draft of the treaty.

24. The next step was to put the draft treaty and supporting documents before the New Zealand cabinet. Following approval, Tokelau's Referendum Commission would set the dates for the referendum, which was expected to be held in November 2005. Should the outcome be in favour of self-government, the treaty and relevant legislative amendments would then proceed through the New Zealand parliamentary process, it was expected that Tokelau could become self-governing in the second quarter of 2006.

25. Preparations were already under way in Tokelau for the referendum, including voter registration. Under the referendum, Tokelau would become a self-governing State in free association with New Zealand on the basis of the constitution and the treaty. Provision had been made for the United Nations to monitor the referendum and a formal request would be forthcoming. Meanwhile, the draft treaty and constitution were being circulated around Tokelau for further discussion. The Office of the Administrator had recently published and distributed a booklet describing Tokelau's move towards self-government and inviting other countries and international organizations to

contribute to the Tokelau International Trust Fund. In addition, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) had agreed to organize a donors' round table in New York. Tokelau had begun discussions on accession to the Cotonou Agreement and Associate Membership of the Commonwealth. Furthermore, Tokelau would be admitted as an Observer to the Pacific Islands Forum at its next meeting.

26. **Mr. Ahmad** (Pakistan) recalled that, at the World Summit in September 2005, world leaders had rededicated themselves to upholding the right to self-determination of all peoples. Nevertheless, some Non-Self-Governing Territories had yet to exercise that right and a progress review was very much in order. Clearly, the unfinished agenda of decolonization could be completed only through effective implementation, of the Plan of Action for the International Decade, which required action and cooperation by the peoples of the Territories, the administering Powers, the international community and the United Nations system as a whole. Pakistan welcomed the intention of the Special Committee to develop accelerated action plans for the decolonization of certain Territories. The administering Powers must cooperate with the United Nations and the Special Committee to ensure full implementation of the Declaration on a case-by-case basis and to create conditions in the Territories that would enable their inhabitants to exercise freely their inalienable right to self-determination. They must also allow representatives of the Territories concerned to participate in discussions of the Special Committee and the Committee. Specialized agencies and international institutions should also increase their assistance to the Territories. Moreover, it was vital that the peoples of the Territories receive information on United Nations activities and programmes as well as available options regarding their political status. Visiting missions to the Territories and regional seminars also furthered decolonization objectives.

27. Pakistan believed that there was no alternative to the principle of self-determination in the process of decolonization. His country welcomed the cooperation between New Zealand and Tokelau and the developments in New Caledonia since the signing of the 1998 Noumea Accord. He encouraged concerned parties in the case of Falkland Islands (Malvinas) and Gibraltar to undertake negotiations to find peaceful and definitive solutions. With regard to the Western Sahara,

Pakistan supported a negotiated peaceful settlement that provided for self-determination.

28. The guiding principles of the Declaration must continue to drive implementation of the decolonization agenda and should not be limited to the issue of Non-Self-Governing Territories but ensure that all peoples under colonial administration or foreign occupation were allowed to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination. In that respect, Pakistan continued to support the just struggle of the Palestinian people for self-determination, freedom and peace, and expressed hope for peace for the people of Jammu and Kashmir in their legitimate quest for self-determination. It was essential to find a just solution acceptable to Pakistan, India and, above all, the people of Kashmir. Pakistan reiterated its commitment to the "Composite Dialogue" with India in the interest of achieving peace and prosperity in the region.

29. **Mr. Kumalo** (South Africa) said that his delegation attached great importance to the issue of decolonization and commended the Special Committee on its work in addressing the plight of those who still lived under colonial domination and foreign occupation.

30. His delegation was concerned that the Saharan people still could not exercise their right to self-determination. The Peace Plan provided a fair way of addressing the matter; however, the report of the Secretary-General (A/60/116) demonstrated that the tireless efforts to try to resolve the impasse had yet to be successful. Although his Government was pleased that the Frente POLISARIO had maintained its support for the Peace Plan, it was concerned that the Kingdom of Morocco had yet to reciprocate and accept the Plan unconditionally. His delegation called on both the Government of Morocco and the Saharan people, represented by the Frente POLISARIO, to redouble their efforts to find a way out of the deadlock.

31. His delegation was encouraged by other developments, including the successful implementation of the first phase of the exchange of family visits programme and the establishment of telephone links between Tindouf and Western Sahara. His Government commended the Frente POLISARIO for its recent release of the remaining Moroccan political prisoners with a view to resolving the impasse and hoped that the Kingdom of Morocco would reciprocate by releasing the remaining Saharan prisoners. The allegation by

Amnesty International that some Saharan human rights defenders had been arrested and tortured in Moroccan jails was a matter of grave concern.

32. His delegation commended the role played by MINURSO under difficult circumstances to enforce the ceasefire agreement and finalize the identification process. It agreed with the Secretary-General that reducing the size of MINURSO would not be advisable at the current stage. It encouraged the parties to work with the Special Envoy and Special Representative of the Secretary-General to resolve their differences. A free and fair referendum conducted by the United Nations was the only way to ensure that the Saharan people could exercise their fundamental right to choose their own destiny.

33. **Mr. Navoti** (Fiji) said that his delegation agreed that it was crucial for the United Nations to redouble its efforts to accelerate the decolonization process in the remaining Territories. Territorial size, geographical isolation and limited resources should not affect the inalienable right of the peoples of those Territories to self-determination. It was the responsibility of the administering Power to create conditions in those Territories that would enable their people to exercise freely and without interference that alienable right. His delegation therefore commended the efforts of New Zealand, the United Kingdom, the United States of America and France to provide relevant information pursuant to Article 73 *e* of the Charter. Formal and informal contacts between the Special Committee and the administering Powers must be continued.

34. His delegation continued to support the dispatch of visiting missions to the Territories and called on the administering Powers to cooperate fully with them. Regional seminars had also served as an effective forum for discussion of issues of concern to the Non-Self-Governing Territories and afforded the representatives of those Territories opportunities to present their views and recommendations to the Special Committee. Fiji supported the continuation of annual regional seminars held alternately in the Caribbean and Pacific regions and would like to see more vigorous efforts to implement their outcomes.

35. Fiji continued to support the Peace Plan for Western Sahara and noted with appreciation the successful implementation of the first phase of the exchange of family visits programme. It supported the Secretary-General's assessment that reducing the size

of MINURSO would not be advisable at the current stage and encouraged the Secretary-General and the Security Council to remain resolute in helping the parties to reach a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution.

36. Fiji welcomed the continued assistance rendered by the specialized agencies and the international institutions associated with the United Nations to Non-Self-Governing Territories. It commended the 58 Member States listed in document A/60/67 which had offered scholarships to inhabitants of Non-Self-Governing Territories, in particular Australia, Malaysia, Portugal, Thailand, the United Kingdom and the Holy See.

37. His Government acknowledged the efforts of New Zealand to help Tokelau to take its place among the self-governing and independent nations of the Pacific. Civil service reforms and the establishment of the Tokelau International Trust Fund provided a mechanism by which regional and international bodies and other countries could assist Tokelau to move towards full self-government. It also noted with appreciation the continued progress made by the Kanak people in New Caledonia under the Matignon and the Nouméa Accords and commended France on its efforts to promote economic, social and cultural development in the Territory.

38. **Mr. Mayoral** (Argentina), speaking on behalf of the Rio Group, said that the Rio Group reaffirmed its support for the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism and called upon the administering Powers to adopt the necessary measures for the decolonization of each of the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories, taking into account their particular characteristics. The Rio Group firmly supported the activities carried out by the Special Committee, in particular the annual assessment of the political, economic and social situation in each of the Territories, the holding of seminars in the Pacific and the Caribbean regions, the visiting missions and the annual recommendations put forward to the General Assembly. It also welcomed the Special Committee's report (A/60/23) and believed that it was essential for the administering Powers and interested States to implement the report's recommendations without delay.

39. The Rio Group considered it necessary for the Governments of the Argentine Republic and of the

United Kingdom to resume negotiations to find a peaceful, just and definitive solution to the sovereignty dispute relating to the Malvinas, South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas in accordance with the relevant resolutions and declarations of the General Assembly, the Special Committee and the Organization of American States.

40. The Rio Group welcomed the 2005 Caribbean Regional Seminar and urged that the conclusions and recommendations of the seminar be implemented without delay. The Group also noted the progress made by Tokelau; it drew attention to the cooperation and collaboration provided by New Zealand as administering Power and invited others to follow suit. With regard to the small island Territories in the Caribbean and the Pacific, the international community must facilitate the sustainable growth of their economies in order to advance the decolonization process according to the wishes of their peoples.

41. Concerning Western Sahara, the Rio Group reaffirmed the responsibility of the United Nations for ensuring the exercise by the Saharan people of their right to self-determination through a just, mutually acceptable and lasting solution. The decision by the Frente POLISARIO to release the last group of Moroccan war prisoners was an important step forward. The Rio Group fully supported the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy to Western Sahara to find such a solution concerning the Territory and called on the parties to cooperate with the United Nations and with each other to put an end to the current deadlock.

42. **Mr. Adel** (Egypt) said that the United Nations was called upon to assist the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories in exercising their right to self-determination and to support peoples under foreign occupation in their legitimate efforts to gain their independence and freedom. That required increased awareness of the decolonization activities of the United Nations, including the work of the Special Committee, which had taken a leading role in determining the best available methods to enable these peoples to exercise their rights in accordance with international law and the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. There was also a need to increase the effectiveness of visiting missions to Non-Self-Governing Territories, as such missions were considered the most effective means of fostering decolonization. Consultations should continue between

the Committee and the administering Powers of the Non-Self-Governing Territories to codify the status of all such missions and help them to achieve their objectives.

43. The administering Powers were responsible for providing the Special Committee and the Secretary-General with comprehensive information on political, economic and legal developments in the Territories. The international community, for its part, had a responsibility to safeguard the inalienable rights of colonial peoples to benefit from their natural resources and defend them from misuse and exploitation of such resources by administering Powers or any other Powers. It must also support colonial peoples in their efforts at capacity-building and protecting their cultural heritage. Because sustainable development was often complicated by the unfavourable geographical or climatic conditions of many Non-Self-Governing Territories, the United Nations and its specialized agencies had a particularly important role to play in planning and implementing economic and social development projects as well as building capacity to deal with natural disasters and providing basic services, education and vocational training and communications.

44. Lastly, it was important to continue to conduct seminars and workshops on the various aspects of the decolonization process. His delegation urged the administering Powers to interact more closely with the Special Committee to further that process. That Committee, in turn, must ensure that it had the proper machinery to follow up and monitor progress towards decolonization.

45. **Mr. Maleki** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the United Nations should endeavour to maintain the issue of decolonization as one of the priority items on its agenda. One of its most remarkable achievements had been to help millions of people under colonization attain their right of self-determination and gain independence. However, the goals of decolonization could not be fully met as long as people were still living in Non-Self-Governing Territories. In the context of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, the Special Committee should intensify its efforts to bring a speedy end to colonialism. To make its work more effective, the Committee needed an official and respectful relationship with the administering Powers.

46. People living under colonial rule were entitled to choose freely their political system and not have it imposed upon them by the administering Powers. It was essential to raise their awareness about their right to self-determination as well as the consequences of any option they might select. They needed to be able to decide freely about their future in full knowledge of the facts and enjoy access to the necessary information through modern communications technology; that was a responsibility of the administering Powers. The flow of information would enable the people to know which stage of the decolonization process they had reached, and what they should do to reach their final goals.

47. Visiting missions to the Non-Self-Governing Territories were of vital importance to compile first-hand information on the living conditions and aspirations of the people living there, with a view to expediting the decolonization process. To that end, the Special Committee should continue to seek the formal and timely cooperation of the administering Powers. Delay by administering Powers in submitting information under Article 73 *e* of the Charter could hinder the process of decolonization.

48. His delegation believed that, in specific cases, such as sovereignty disputes, bilateral negotiations should be seriously considered as a viable way forward; they were far preferable to any unilateral action. In those Territories in which people were living under exploitation and domination and were being treated as second-class citizens, the Committee and the General Assembly should listen carefully to their representations and respond appropriately to their requests. A further source of concern was military installations and activities of some administering Powers in Non-Self-Governing Territories. The interests of the people must be duly taken into account and their views fully respected by the administering Powers. Moreover, it was the solemn obligation of the administrative Powers of the Non-Self-Governing Territories to promote the political, economic and social and educational advancement of their inhabitants.

49. **Ms. Hughes Ferrari** (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that CARICOM fully endorsed the resolutions contained in the report of the Special Committee (A/60/23). The Special Committee was spearheading a proactive approach towards the implementation by the wider United Nations system of

the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly, a step welcomed by CARICOM as 7 of the 16 Non-Self-Governing Territories were in the Caribbean region.

50. CARICOM continued to promote the integration of the Caribbean Non-Self-Governing Territories into the Community and other regional and international organizations as that engagement prepared them for assuming full self-government. It endorsed the development of modalities for their participation in programmes and activities of the Economic and Social Council, as a natural evolution of their process of self-determination. Their elevation from political dependency to full self-government was fundamental to the regional integration process.

51. A serious obstacle to the achievement of self-determination was the lack of information available to the Territories and Member States. Many people in the Territories remained, to a great extent, unaware of the legitimate political options available to them; while information provided to Member States through official United Nations reports did not provide the necessary insight into the dynamics of contemporary dependency arrangements. Much of the information deficit could be attributed to a failure to implement successive plans of action of the International Decades for the Eradication of Colonialism. The midterm review of the Second International Decade had revealed a serious information deficit. Visiting missions, such as that undertaken to Bermuda in 2005, could help bridge that deficit, and should be expanded.

52. CARICOM was of the opinion that the mandate of the Special Committee could be successfully carried out only if there was a concerted effort by the international community to implement the actions upon which it had agreed. It could not accept the removal of international oversight of any given Territory through premature removal from the United Nations list. Success of the work of the United Nations should not be judged by how many — and how quickly — Territories were de-listed, but by whether a Territory had, in fact, achieved a full measure of self-government.

53. CARICOM reaffirmed its support for the early achievement of self-determination by the people of Western Sahara; it reiterated its call for the full implementation of the Peace Plan and expressed concern at the continued political deadlock which could cause increased instability in the region.

54. CARICOM conveyed its appreciation to UNDP, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and other bodies for consistently providing assistance to the Territories. In past sessions, the draft resolution concerning the implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples by the specialized agencies and the international institutions associated with the United Nations had carried a number of abstentions in the General Assembly and in the Economic and Social Council because of concerns that the General Assembly did not have the authority to make such a request to a specialized agency. However, that request was not inconsistent with established practice as numerous resolutions adopted by consensus contained requests to specialized agencies.

55. **Mr. Aisi** (Papua New Guinea) said that it was regrettable that, half way through the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, only a few Territories were able to look forward to self-determination in the near future. However, he wished to acknowledge the continuing cooperation of the United Kingdom, France, the United States of America and New Zealand as administering Powers.

56. The case of Tokelau, as it made real and steady progress towards self-determination, with the help of New Zealand, the administering Power, was a reminder that the work of the Committee could bear fruit if all its members worked together in a true spirit of cooperation and goodwill. Tokelau would be granted observer status at the forthcoming Pacific Leaders' Summit in Papua New Guinea in October 2005; he was gratified that history would record that the granting of observer status had taken place in Papua New Guinea. It was to be hoped that Tokelau would become a beacon for other Territories and administering Powers.

57. His delegation fully supported the emphasis on implementation of the Plan of Action. It welcomed the progress made in Bermuda.

58. **Mr. Williams** (United Kingdom), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that he was responding to remarks made by the Permanent Representative of Argentina and the representatives of Cuba and Pakistan on the issue of sovereignty of the Falkland Islands. The United Kingdom's position on that issue was well known and had last been set out in

detail by the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom to the United Nations in a written right of reply to the statement made by the President of Argentina at the High-Level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly on 14 September 2005. The United Kingdom had no doubts about its sovereignty over the Falkland Islands. There could be no negotiations on the sovereignty of the Falkland Islands unless and until such time as the islanders so wished.

59. His delegation reserved its right of reply to comments made about Gibraltar at a later date.

Requests for hearings

60. **The Chairman** said that he took it that the Committee wished to grant the request for hearings relating to the question of Gibraltar in document A/C.4/60/2.

61. *It was so decided.*

62. **The Chairman** said that he took it that the Committee wished to grant the requests for hearings relating to the question of Guam contained in documents A/C.4/60/3 and Add.1.

63. *It was so decided.*

64. The Chairman said that he took it that the Committee wished to grant the request for hearings relating to the question of New Caledonia contained in document A/C.4/60/4.

65. *It was so decided.*

66. **The Chairman** said that he took it that the Committee wished to grant the requests for hearings relating to the question of Western Sahara contained in documents A/C.4/60/5 and Addenda 1 to 44.

67. *It was so decided.*

The meeting rose at 5.30 p.m.



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Summary record of the 3rd meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 6 October 2005, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Aliyev (Azerbaijan)

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* Items which the Committee has decided to consider together.

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The meeting was called to order at 3:20 p.m.

Agenda item 26: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (Territories not covered under other items) (*continued*) (A/60/25 and 116)

Agenda item 34: Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories transmitted under Article 73 e of the Charter of the United Nations (*continued*) (A/60/23, chaps. VI) and XI, A/60/69)

Agenda item 35: Economic and other activities which affect the interests of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories (*continued*) (A/60/23, chaps. X and XI)

Agenda item 36: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples by the specialized agencies and the international institutions associated with the United Nations (*continued*) (A/60/23, chaps. VI and VII, and A/60/64)

Agenda item 37: Offers by Member States of study and training facilities for inhabitants of Non-Self-Governing Territories (*continued*) (A/60/67)

1. **Mr. Baali** (Algeria), said that 45 years after the adoption of General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV), it was evident that no other United Nations resolution had had such a decisive impact on the course of history. The bastions of colonialism had fallen one by one and only a few countries remained on the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories. One such Territory was Western Sahara. It had been invaded, occupied and then torn apart by its northern neighbour, forcing tens of thousands of its inhabitants to seek refuge in Algeria and Mauritania. However, the courageous people of the Territory had taken up arms under the Frente POLISARIO and battled their aggressors until, in 1990, Morocco had accepted the Settlement Plan negotiated under the auspices of the United Nations. Unfortunately, neither the Settlement Plan, that provided for a referendum to enable the people of Western Sahara to exercise their right of self-determination, nor the Houston Accords of 1997, nor the Peace Plan for self-determination of the people of Western Sahara had been implemented. Instead,

Morocco, after repeated excuses and evasions, had rejected the very principle of a referendum.

2. None of the specious arguments that Morocco put forward to try to justify its occupation of the Territory or the false solutions it proposed to avoid its international obligations could change the situation of Western Sahara as an illegally occupied Non-Self-Governing Territory. The international community would never accept the occupation as a fait accompli, and the Saharan people would never resign themselves to living under foreign occupation and renounce their rights. That was clear from the nationalist demonstrations which had been taking place with increasing frequency over recent months, in various towns of occupied Western Sahara, and had been violently put down by the Moroccan occupying forces, and the impact they had had on public opinion despite the systematic closure of the Territory to the media and non-governmental organizations. It was therefore not surprising that no country had recognized Morocco's alleged sovereignty over Western Sahara, and that on all maps of the world, Western Sahara continued to be shown as a separate entity from Morocco. Moreover, the very fact that the question of Western Sahara remained on the agenda of the main organs of the Organization was enough to negate any claim by Morocco to sovereignty over the Territory.

3. There was still time for Morocco to return to international legality and acknowledge the Peace Plan, which had been unanimously approved by the Security Council. The forthcoming visit to the region of the Secretary-General's new Personal Envoy for Western Sahara could provide an opportunity for a resumption of the peace process. His Government would continue to give its full support to any solution in conformity with international law that would allow the people of Western Sahara to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination.

4. **Mr. Yañez-Barnuevo** (Spain), referring to the question of Gibraltar, said that the new Trilateral Forum for Dialogue, which worked with an open agenda, had held two meetings, in February and July 2005, in which the three participants — Spain, the United Kingdom and Gibraltar — had made progress on issues relating to the Territory's airport, gate border, pensions and telecommunications, and on cooperation in environmental and border matters, culture and sports, and legal and police matters. A third meeting

would be held the coming week to reach final agreements on those issues.

5. An important innovation in the Forum for Dialogue — which departed from the procedures followed theretofore under the Brussels Process — was the fact that all three parties spoke separately for themselves, on the basis of equal participation, and without prejudice to their constitutional status, including the fact that Gibraltar was not a sovereign, independent state. Furthermore, all Forum decisions were taken by consensus, and in the case of decisions properly taken bilaterally between Spain and the United Kingdom, the understanding was that the United Kingdom would not reach agreement without the consent of the Government of Gibraltar. Gibraltar's sovereignty would be one such issue to be handled bilaterally, although of course the aspirations and interest of the people of Gibraltar would be taken into account. The atmosphere of mutual confidence and cooperation that had been instituted meant that, as the Forum proceeded with its work, it would be possible to begin at the appropriate moment to consider a definitive solution to the question of Gibraltar.

6. The Joint Committee of the Territorial Government of Gibraltar and the Mancomunidad de Municipios de Gibraltar that had also been established in 2004 had met several times to identify and carry out mutually beneficial projects, with the constructive participation of the various political groups represented.

7. In view of the foregoing, Spain could state that it was fulfilling the mandate given to it by the General Assembly in decision 59/519, and that it stood ready to continue endeavouring to put an end to the conflict over Gibraltar.

Hearing of representatives of Non-Self-Governing Territories and petitioners

8. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Caruana, Chief Minister of Gibraltar, took a place at the table.*

9. **Mr. Caruana** (Chief Minister of Gibraltar) observed that, stripped of historical and political complications, the question of Gibraltar was really a very simple one. Over the past 1,300 years or so, Gibraltar had been Moorish for 727 years, Spanish for 266 years, and a British possession and then colony for 301 years. The Territory already enjoyed a very large measure of self-government, having its own

democratically elected Government responsible for all matters except external affairs, defence and internal security, and its own Parliament that legislated in respect of all matters. Everyone, including Spain, agreed that Gibraltar should be decolonized. The single issue at stake was whether that decolonization should take place in accordance with the freely expressed wishes of the people of Gibraltar, or whether — as Spain maintained — it should be achieved by the handover of sovereignty by the administering Power, the United Kingdom, to Gibraltar's neighbour, Spain, in negotiations conducted bilaterally between them.

10. Spain asserted that it was United Nations doctrine that Gibraltar's decolonization must be achieved by applying not the principle of self-determination but the principle of territorial integrity, namely, by the handover of Gibraltar's sovereignty from the United Kingdom to Spain, regardless of the wishes of the people. For the people, that would be not decolonization but recolonization. Such an undemocratic handover should be anathema to all countries governed by the rule of law. Nor could it be accepted as United Nations doctrine, for the principle of territorial integrity related properly only to the disintegration of existing States and not to the decolonization of listed Non-Self-Governing Territories. That was the meaning of the concept of territorial integrity in the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, and especially in the Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States in Accordance with the Charter of the United Nations (resolution 2625 (XXV)) which, after giving classic statements of the two principles of self-determination and territorial integrity, went on, in the penultimate paragraph of the section on the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, to give the only United Nations statement of the correct interrelationship between those two principles. It was self-evident, under the terms of that Declaration, that Spain was not possessed of a Government representing the people and Territory of Gibraltar, and that, since Gibraltar was not a part of Spain and would not be seceding from it, its decolonization would not result in the disintegration of Spain. The principle of territorial integrity therefore did not override the principle of self-determination in Gibraltar's case.

11. There was a further confusion by Spain of two other distinct issues: decolonization and sovereignty. Spain asserted that Gibraltar could not be decolonized by applying the principle of self-determination because of the existence of a so-called sovereignty dispute over the Territory, a conceptual misconception that had no foundation in United Nations doctrine or international law. To solve a sovereignty dispute relating to a Territory against the wishes of its people was not a valid means of decolonization. United Nations doctrine maintained that self-determination was an inalienable right and a basic and fundamental human right. Inalienable rights could not be overridden by the mere existence of a territorial sovereignty claim. Sovereignty disputes had often survived decolonization of a Territory by self-determination, and did not stand in the way of decolonization. Such had been the position of the International Court of Justice as well, when, in its judgement on Namibia, it had declared the principle of self-determination to be applicable to all Non-Self-Governing Territories regardless of demands for integration by an interested State. Regrettably, those clear statements in United Nations doctrine and international law had been misrepresented in the reports and recommendations of recent regional seminars held by the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples.

12. The position of the people of Gibraltar themselves was that their homeland could be decolonized only through their exercise of their inalienable right to freely decide their own political future. If the Committee, or Spain and the United Kingdom, disagreed with that position, they were urged to refer the matter to the International Court of Justice for an advisory opinion. The Territory was currently engaged in constitutional talks with its administering Power, the United Kingdom, for the negotiation of a non-colonial constitution endowing the people of Gibraltar with the greatest possible measure of self-government. The expectation was that the talks would be concluded satisfactorily early in 2006.

13. For a decade his Government had decried the concept of bilateral negotiations about Gibraltar between its administering Power and the territorial claimant, Spain. The concept was wrong, because it was completely disrespectful of the rights of the people of the Territory, and ineffective, because nothing could

be agreed to without their consent. Accordingly, he had repeatedly urged the Committee to modify its annual resolution on the question of Gibraltar to reflect the fact that in practice no bilateral negotiations had been held since September 2002 and that the United Kingdom did not intend to resume them.

14. Gibraltar applauded the establishment of the new Trilateral Forum for Dialogue, separate from the so-called Brussels Process, for it had inaugurated a realistic and viable dialogue between all parties for the benefit and prosperity of Gibraltar and the whole region, in particular the Campo de Gibraltar, the district of Spain that bordered Gibraltar. Consequently, the Committee's resolution on the question should not perpetuate a fiction by focusing on the obsolete bilateral Brussels Process. At the very least, the resolution should include a full reference to the new tripartite process and eliminate pointless quotations from the text of the Brussels Declaration. The Government of Gibraltar would continue to participate constructively in the new tripartite process, in which all parties understood that the others had not changed their position on basic questions but were willing to continue working with mutual respect.

15. *Mr. Carriana withdrew.*

16. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Bossano (Leader of the Opposition, Parliament of Gibraltar) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

17. **Mr. Bossano** (Leader of the Opposition, Parliament of Gibraltar), said that Gibraltar was still under colonial rule because, for 40 years, Spain had done everything in its power, at international forums and bilaterally with the United Kingdom, to impede progress towards decolonization. The Government of the United Kingdom had taken the position that, under article X of the Treaty of Utrecht signed in 1713, Spain had the right to claim sovereignty over Gibraltar if the United Kingdom relinquished it. In 1964, however, the United Nations had confirmed that the Declaration on decolonization applied fully to the Territory of Gibraltar; that meant that no bilateral treaty, let alone one from 1713, when the very notion of human rights did not exist, could override the provisions of the United Nations Charter. Furthermore, the Treaty of Utrecht was an anachronism, and negated all the values that the United Nations was established to uphold. Yet two Socialist Governments, that of Spain and that of the United Kingdom, were hiding behind the pseudo

legitimacy of that long-defunct treaty to justify their failure to observe their obligations to a people under colonial rule.

18. The United Kingdom had indicated to the Committee in 2004 that it did not subscribe to the policy that reports under Article 73 *e* of the Charter had to continue until the General Assembly decided that a Territory had achieved a full measure of self-government; he therefore expected reports under Article 73 *e* to cease when the current negotiations were finalized and the referendum was held.

19. Gibraltar was a culturally distinct and geographically separate country, similar to the other 15 countries on the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories, and the Special Committee had clearly stated that its goal was to obtain self-determination for all those Territories, including Gibraltar. However, the Committee could not continue to urge the resumption of bilateral talks between the United Kingdom and Spain when it knew full well that no such talks would take place.

20. The annual exercise of adopting resolutions on Gibraltar continued to be utterly meaningless, and totally overlooked the aspirations of the people of Gibraltar, who wished to agree upon a new Constitution, with the United Kingdom, granting them the maximum possible level of self-government. The novelty in 2005 was the Trilateral Forum for Dialogue, in which Spain, the United Kingdom and Gibraltar were supposed to participate. Spain mistakenly believed that the Forum would generate a more receptive climate to making sovereignty concessions as part of a deal with the United Kingdom. Yet even if Spain dropped all its restrictions and asked for nothing in exchange, that would not happen. Gibraltar was not taken in by promises of greater prosperity, as its per capita gross domestic product was already higher than that of Spain. If Gibraltar was not afforded support, it would achieve decolonization and exercise self-determination on its own, as so many other countries had done.

21. *Mr. Bossano withdrew.*

22. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Aguon (Chamoru Cultural Development and Research Institute) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

23. **Mr. Aguon** (Chamoru Cultural Development and Research Institute) said that the island of Guahan,

better known as Guam, continued to be illegally occupied by the United States of America. Local politicians were also embracing privatization and militarization agendas that were depleting Guahan of its assets, infrastructure and cultural integrity.

24. The current Governor of Guahan, was supporting a policy that was profoundly anti-Chamoru and anti-democratic. Together with some members of the legislature and of the business community, he had embarked upon privatization in a number of key sectors. Telecommunications and electricity had been the first to be privatized; plans were under way to privatize the one and only hospital; and now the politicians were calling for the privatization of the water supply, and of the island's one and only commercial port.

25. The politicians were in cahoots with the local Chamber of Commerce to increase the military presence in Guahan, which was already over-militarized. There were no alternative media in Guahan to report on that state of affairs as the main newspaper, the *Pacific Daily News*, was a subsidiary of the United States-based Gannett Corporation. The President and Publisher of that newspaper was also the Chairman of the Armed Forces Committee of the Chamber of Commerce, whose main mission was to increase civilian support of the military presence in Guahan. Not only was the United States increasing its military presence, it was building two new schools for its children, while denying Chamoru children a dignified, decolonized future.

26. This year it had been revealed that United States federal agencies, under the Department of the Interior, had deliberately quashed a presidential directive handed down by President Ford in 1975 mandating that Guam be given a status no less favourable than that of the commonwealth arrangements of the Northern Mariana Islands.

27. The colonized Chamoru of Guahan were still invisible in the international community. They challenged the Committee to apply pressure on the United States of America to usher along self-determination via a legitimate, Chamoru-only vote on political status, and to demand that the United States provide funding for the conduct of a public education campaign on political status options.

28. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Quinata (Chamoru Nation) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

29. **Ms. Quinata** (Chamoru Nation) said that the people of Guam — the Chamoru — continued to live under colonial rule in their homeland. More than one third of the entire island was occupied by the United States Armed Forces. Although some Chamoru people had come to believe that self-determination was a mere illusion, others had chosen instead to put their faith in the rule of international law and the work of the Committee.

30. The Chamoru were increasingly concerned at attempts by the United States of America, the administering Power, to undercut the decolonization process, while tightening its grip on Guam. Although some maintained that Guam was already effectively self-governed, because there were local elections, locally elected officials pledged allegiance to the United States of America and were bound by its laws. The war on terrorism had become a catch-all excuse for every injustice and act of oppression. The administering Power continued to build additional large storage facilities for weapons of mass destruction on the island. Indeed, the two areas of greatest concern for the Chamoru were militarization and privatization. For example, attempts were being made to privatize Guam's only commercial seaport, and the administering Power continued to cripple the local economy by enforcing regulations such as the Jones Act.

31. Over the past 400 years, Guam had been colonized by Spain, the United States, Japan, and then again by the United States. Although the people of Guam had yet to exercise self-determination, they would continue to fight for that right. The Chamoru people called on the Committee to insist that the United States pay war reparations, clean up contaminated land and water, pay adequate compensation for land it was using, and fulfil its treaty obligations to provide the means for an adequate education campaign on the right to decolonization. In addition, they sought assistance in bringing their case before the International Court of Justice.

32. *Ms. Quinata withdrew.*

Question of Western Sahara (A/C.4/60/S and Add.1-44)

33. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Ramos took a place at the petitioners' table.*

34. **Ms. Ramos** (American Association of Jurists) said that her organization was a non-governmental organization enjoying consultative status with the Economic and Social Council. The association expressed its solidarity with the Saharan people and their right to self-determination and independence. The Saharan people had suffered for more than 25 years the fierce repression of the Moroccan occupation regime. Since May 2005, they had struggled en masse to claim their freedom. The heroic hunger strike by Saharan prisoners had reaffirmed the cruelty of the Moroccan occupation and underscored the ongoing violations of human rights. The United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) was urged to do everything possible to facilitate the immediate and unconditional release of all Saharan political prisoners, and should immediately call for a referendum on self-determination. The Secretary-General, the General Assembly and the Security Council should urgently intervene to protect civilians, as well as the men and women who had been jailed for defending the human rights and independence of the Saharans, and should ensure the fundamental freedoms of all Saharans. It was untenable for a colonial administration to have the power to impose arbitrary imprisonment and to deny access to the information media, international observers and human rights organizations.

35. The decolonization of Western Sahara should take place in accordance with the settlement plan through a referendum supervised by the United Nations. If the rights of the Saharan people were not respected, it was very likely that the armed conflict would start anew. The settlement plan had already led to the declaration of a ceasefire, the deployment of MINURSO, the beginning of voter identification and the exchange of prisoners.

36. The United Nations should face up to its responsibility in Western Sahara, as should Spain. The United Nations had the responsibility to protect the territorial integrity and natural resources of Western Sahara, whose territory was coveted by transnational economic interests and major Powers because of its natural resources. The Association called on the Committee to take note of the harsh living conditions

of more than 160,000 Saharans in the Tindouf refugee camps, and called on Member States to recognize officially the Saharan Arab Democratic Republic.

37. *Ms. Ramos withdrew.*

38. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Hardin took a place at the petitioners' table.*

39. **Ms. Hardin**, speaking on behalf of Mr. Wamp, member of Congress, United States of America, said that 150,000 people remained in extremely harsh conditions in refugee camps in the Sahara desert. Despite the extremes of scorching summer heat and frigid winter temperatures, the Saharans were still living in tents and mud brick rooms. Water was trucked in, electricity was virtually non-existent and they used holes in the ground for sanitation facilities. They continued to rely almost totally on humanitarian assistance from the international community. The lack of variety in food aid was heartbreaking and malnutrition rates, especially among young children, were extremely high. As a result, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) had initiated a therapeutic feeding programme for children. The absence of meaningful work was another depressing aspect of the refugee camps.

40. Despite those extreme hardships, the Saharan people were a shining example of the triumph of the human spirit. A strong and vibrant people, they still had hope for their future and were warm and welcoming to strangers. Women played a prominent role in Saharan society and had parity with men under their Constitution. They ran many of the administrative institutions of the refugee camps. The literacy rate in the camps was astonishingly high, as were children's school attendance rates, especially in the early grades. Women led sanitation committees in each area to ensure order and cleanliness.

41. The refugees were well-informed and were aware of the current meeting. They had had their hopes dashed many times, however, and were frustrated and disillusioned by the lack of follow-through by the international community. Only a few people in the world had the means to help the Saharan people and it was hoped that those present at the meeting would take action to help them return to their beloved homeland.

42. *Ms. Hardin withdrew.*

43. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Ortiz (Secretary, Federación Estatal de Instituciones Solidarias con el Pueblo Saharaui) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

44. **Mr. Ortiz** (Secretary, Federación Estatal de Instituciones Solidarias con el Pueblo Saharaui (FEDISSAH)), said that FEDISSAH condemned the brutal repression of the most basic human rights of the population of the occupied territories in Western Sahara. The Moroccan authorities continued to monitor the entry of international observers into Western Sahara and in recent months had on 11 occasions prevented the entry of political and social delegations from Spain who had wished to investigate the situation of Saharan detainees.

45. On 12 November 2005, the European day of mobilization for the liberation of Saharan political prisoners would be held in Madrid, which would provide an opportunity to remind the Government of Spain of its historical responsibility for the decolonization of Western Sahara and the need to renounce the tripartite agreements of 30 years earlier. It was important that the last colony in Africa be allowed to exercise its right to self-determination.

46. The referendum on self-determination provided for in Security Council resolutions 650 (1990) and 690 (1991) had still not been held. Unfortunately the Government of Morocco continued to prevent the holding of the referendum and to impede the new plan for the self-determination of Western Sahara, unanimously approved by the Security Council in resolution 1495 (2003). The United Nations and the Security Council must act urgently to ensure the implementation of the relevant resolutions and the holding of a referendum.

47. The United Nations was at a crossroads: it must ensure that the Government of Morocco complied with its commitments or withdraw and lose credibility and risk a return to armed conflict, which could affect peace and security in the entire north-east of Africa. He recalled that the settlement plan, the Houston agreements and the Baker plan had been accepted by the Frente POLISARIO. The international community was too tolerant of the intransigence on the part of the Kingdom of Morocco and its illegal occupation and exploitation of the resources of Western Sahara. In that context, he called on the European Union to reconsider the recent fishing treaty signed with the Kingdom of

Morocco. The time had come to find a solution. If there was no other alternative, the Security Council should act under Chapter VII of the Charter in order to ensure that the heroic people of Western Sahara, who had suffered so much, could live in peace and dignity and freely determine their own future.

48. *Mr. Ortiz withdrew.*

49. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Navarro (Consejo General de la Abogacía Española) took a seat at the petitioners' table.*

50. **Ms. Navarro** (Consejo General de la Abogacía Española (CGAE)) said that the objective of CGAE was to defend the fundamental rights and freedoms of the citizens of the world. Since 2002, it had endeavoured to ensure an independent and objective review of the situation in Western Sahara and in 2005 had sent several delegations of jurists to investigate the workings of the Moroccan judicial system with respect to the population of Western Sahara. Those delegations had received no cooperation from the Moroccan administration and had often had to face obstacles imposed by the latter.

51. In July 2005 a delegation had attended the trials of Saharans who had been arrested in the city of El Aaiún in May 2005 for having participated in peaceful demonstrations in support of the human rights and right to self-determination of the Saharan population. During the trial the area surrounding the courthouse had been cordoned off by the police and military and even vehicles belonging to MINURSO had not been allowed to enter. No Saharans or international press had been allowed in the courtroom; only the official Moroccan press had been allowed in. Other than military and police and plainclothes policemen, only eight Saharans, female family members of the accused, and, on one occasion, a Moroccan human rights representative, had been allowed in the courtroom. The defendants, on successive appearances, showed signs of both earlier and recent physical abuse; it was obvious they had received only the most cursory medical care. The defendants, speaking Spanish, had called out slogans such as "The Sahara is not Moroccan" and "Viva POLISARIO" which had led to their removal from the courtroom by the guards, who had beaten them with clubs. The trial had then continued without them. The defence lawyers had not appeared, saying the verdict was pre-determined.

52. The trials had violated all the principles of international law on the right to due process and a fair trial and were tantamount to kangaroo courts. She noted that trials against Saharan human rights defenders were held in Morocco, which did not have sovereignty over the Non-Self-Governing Territory of Western Sahara and was not the administering Power, and that Morocco's actions were in violation of article 1 of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.

53. *Ms. Navarro withdrew.*

54. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Etxebarria (Euskal Fonda), took a place at the petitioners' table.*

55. **Ms. Etxebarria** (Euskal Fonda) said her association, which represented local and regional authorities in the Basque country, supported the Saharan people in their quest for self-determination. Towns and villages had been twinned with their Saharan counterparts. Saharan children visited the Basque country and families from the Basque country visited the Saharan refugee camps in Tindouf. Euskal Fonda provided food and financial aid to the camps, and publicized the brutal repression of human rights activists; yet the international community and the United Nations had failed to guarantee the human rights of the Saharan population, and MINURSO had not intervened or even issued a communiqué regarding the serious events of May 2005.

56. She noted that the Frente POLISARIO was complying with international agreements and had freed Moroccan prisoners of war and called on the Government of Morocco to meet its commitments. It was urgent that the United Nations act to ensure the holding of a referendum on self-determination for Western Sahara in order to put an end to the suffering already endured by two generations of Saharans.

57. The Government of Morocco persisted in its brutal and illegal occupation while the international community continued to speak of dialogue and peaceful and friendly agreements between two peoples. The Saharan people had an inalienable right to a referendum on self-determination and elected officials, like those she represented, had an obligation to ensure that justice for the Saharan people prevailed over the economic interests of a small minority.

58. *Ms. Etxebarria withdrew.*

59. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Knapp took a place at the petitioners' table.*

60. **Mr. Knapp** said that the United Nations, in trying to remain neutral in the Western Sahara, was in fact being pro-Moroccan because the status quo was in Morocco's favour. The United Nations should consider other options in accordance with Article 33 of the Charter, the Security Council could call upon the parties to seek arbitration or a binding legal settlement; the General Assembly could denounce the occupation as it had with regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict or call upon Morocco to respect the finding of the International Court of Justice, which had declared that Morocco had no ties of sovereignty over the region. The United Nations should not hand over a peaceful people to an occupying Power under the pretence of autonomy; it should not reward colonizers by allowing them to annex territory or be deceived by promises of self-rule in a region increasingly being appropriated by Moroccan settlers. On behalf of the sons and daughters of the sands, he said that 30 years as refugees was too long; another generation of Saharans should not likewise be divorced from their land.

61. *Mr. Knapp withdrew.*

62. **Mr. Williams** (United Kingdom), speaking in exercise of the right of reply to the statement made by the representative of Spain, welcomed the latter's remarks concerning Gibraltar and stressed that his Government believed that issues relating to Gibraltar could only be resolved in a climate of trust, cooperation and dialogue. He therefore warmly welcomed the newly established Trilateral Forum for Dialogue, through which all parties, including Gibraltar, could express their views. He also welcomed the positive progress on practical issues described by the representative of Spain.

63. He reiterated that the United Kingdom had no doubts about its sovereignty over Gibraltar. His Government stood by its commitment to the people of Gibraltar as contained in the preamble to the 1969 constitution of Gibraltar, which stated that "Her Majesty's Government will never enter into arrangements under which the people of Gibraltar would pass under the sovereignty of another state against their freely and democratically expressed wishes".

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.



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Chairman: Mr. Aliyev..... (Azerbaijan)

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05-53980 (E)



The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda item 26: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (continued) (A/60/23, A/60/116)

Hearing of petitioners (continued)

(A/C.4/60/5 Add.5-43 and A/C.4/60/5 Add.44)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Briones (International Association of Jurists for Western Sahara) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

2. **Mr. Briones** (International Association of Jurists for Western Sahara) said that it was deplorable that the human rights of the Saharan people continued to be violated and they still had not had an opportunity to exercise their right to self-determination through the holding of a referendum. Morocco was an occupying Power, not the administering Power; it had no sovereignty over Western Sahara and its continued presence was illegal under international law. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 2625 (XXV), and the right of the Saharan people to self-determination must be respected by all States.

3. Combatants of national liberation movements like the Frente POLISARIO enjoyed special protection under General Assembly resolution 3103 (XXVIII) and the 1949 Geneva Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War applied to them. Nevertheless the rights of combatants as well as the civilian population continued to be systematically violated: arbitrary arrest, torture and politically motivated criminal trials against Saharan civil and social leaders and human rights defenders continued. The basic rights of the Saharan people had been recognized by the international community; he called for the appointment of a new Independent Jurist for Western Sahara, a position which had been vacant since 1999.

4. The conflict in Western Sahara was the last great test of the decolonization process. The Saharan people must be protected and their rights of freedom of expression and association preserved in order to ensure that the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism was brought to a successful conclusion.

5. *Mr. Briones withdrew.*

6. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Miranda (Asociación de Amistad con el Pueblo Saharaui de las*

Palmas de Gran Canaria) took a place at the petitioners' table.

7. **Mr. Miranda** (Asociación de Amistad con el Pueblo Saharaui de las Palmas de Gran Canaria) said that in August 2005 he and three fellow priests had visited El Aaiún to investigate the human rights situation in Western Sahara. The city was clearly an occupied city, with a very heavy police and military presence. Any type of demonstration was quickly suppressed. Saharan activists with whom they had met told tales of physical mistreatment including torture and disappearances. The population was very concerned at the lack of progress towards self-determination and the international community's apparent indifference to their fate. The priests had been urged to visit the prison to ensure prisoners were still safe and to investigate the many missing persons. They were told people did not feel safe visiting the palace of justice unless there were international observers present, and did not feel safe even in hospitals. Many Saharans expressed regret that their Spanish documentation had been lost or stolen.

8. The situation in the prisons was disastrous: torture, rape, ill treatment, and hellish living conditions were common. Police cruelty against the civilian population had also been well documented by the international press. The people had no respect for the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), which seemed to be doing nothing to protect the civilian population or look into the situation of prisoners, while staying at the best hotels and driving around in modern vehicles. The people also complained about exploitation of their natural resources by the Moroccan regime. Such violations of the rights of the people of Western Sahara were a direct result of the state of siege imposed by the Moroccan authorities who were trying to repress the Saharan people through fear, brutality, rape, imprisonment and summary trials.

9. *Mr. Miranda withdrew.*

10. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Pinto Leite (International Platform of Jurists for East Timor) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

11. **Mr. Pinto Leite** (International Platform of Jurists for East Timor) recalled that like in East Timor, a free and fair referendum was the only real solution or legal option for Western Sahara, yet halfway through the Second International Decade for the Eradication of

Colonialism, Morocco continued to defy international law.

12. There was nevertheless increasing pressure on Morocco. The majority of the Saharan population lived in the camps of Tindouf under its own administration, and part of Western Sahara was already a liberated zone. The Saharan Arab Democratic Republic had established relations with more than 70 States, most recently Kenya and South Africa, and it had all the attributes of a sovereign State, thus fulfilling the legal criteria for statehood under the Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States.

13. The abuse of Saharan prisoners in the El Aaiun prison had been exposed but the Moroccan authorities, rather than addressing that situation, had started lawsuits against two prisoners, accused of smuggling photos out of the prison, and claimed the photos had been forged. The Moroccan authorities seemed convinced that the international community would accept a fait accompli and had falsified maps of the region, erasing the border between Morocco and the occupied territory. Recently they had forced the Dutch organizers of an exhibition celebrating 400 years of relations between Morocco and the Netherlands to modify their catalogue to reflect Morocco's version of a map of the area. Similar actions had been taken during the recent 2005 World Exposition in Aichi, Japan.

14. The truth about the situation in Western Sahara was nevertheless well documented and he hoped that the Security Council and Member States would put an end to the colonization of that territory by Morocco and that the mandate of MINURSO would be changed so that it could intervene to prevent human rights violations. The international community must also ensure that the long overdue referendum on self-determination was held so that the last colony in Africa could finally be freed from foreign oppression and the goals of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism could be achieved.

15. *Mr. Pinto Leite withdrew.*

16. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Lippiat (President, WE International) took a place at the petitioner's table.

17. **Mr. Lippiat** said he had often visited with the people of Western Sahara who were a beautiful and resilient people; for nearly 30 years, they had

conducted their struggle within international norms, avoiding terrorism from the outset. The Saharan government was an example of active democracy for the entire region. Tragically, however, Morocco had been able to persist in its illegal and brutal occupation of Western Sahara and its flagrant violations of United Nations resolutions and international law and the United Nations had done next to nothing. Morocco was attempting to shift the debate from the right to self-determination of the Saharan people to Morocco's so-called "territorial integrity" and "sovereignty". He stressed, however, that Morocco's sovereignty over and illegal occupation of Western Sahara had never been recognized. That had been clearly stated by the International Court of Justice in its Advisory Opinion of October 1975. Morocco was also in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Times of War because it was resettling thousands of Moroccans in Western Sahara.

18. Amnesty International had reported that hundreds if not thousands of Saharans had been imprisoned or disappeared and recent demonstrations against the Moroccan Government had been met by arrest and torture. Morocco claimed that the 160,000 residents living in the camps in Algeria were not refugees but were being held against their will, which was nonsense. He recalled that the Baker Plan had been accepted by the Frente POLISARIO, which had also recently released 404 Moroccan prisoners. Morocco, however, had rejected the Baker Plan and characterized the conflict in Western Sahara as artificially created by the Frente POLISARIO.

19. It was urgent that the United Nations invoke Chapter VII of the Charter and impose a solution. Morocco was doing nothing to bring about a resolution to the conflict and the Saharan people continued to suffer and wait. They must not be abandoned by the international community, while the United Nations continued to spend millions keeping a presence in the region. In order to avoid a return to conflict, Western Sahara must be returned to its people.

20. *Mr. Lippiat withdrew.*

21. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Rodríguez (Liga Española Pro Derechos Humanos), took a place at the petitioners' table.*

22. **Mr. Rodríguez** (Liga Española Pro Derechos Humanos) said that it was intolerable, at a time when human rights were a priority on the international

agenda, that nearly 200,000 Saharans still lived in the refugee camps in Tindouf, in one of the most inhospitable regions of the planet. Furthermore, the systematic violation of the rights of the Saharan people by the Moroccan authorities had been well documented; some international observers had even characterized that oppression as genocide. Requests by non-governmental organizations to undertake investigations of the human rights situation were systematically denied; for example, he and several other passengers had been refused permission to deplane by the Moroccan authorities when they had arrived in Western Sahara in June 2005. In that context, he paid tribute to the 37 Saharan political prisoners who had undertaken a 51-day hunger strike in August and September 2005 to draw attention to the illegal occupation of Western Sahara and demand a referendum on self-determination, as approved by the United Nations.

23. He welcomed the appointment of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara and looked forward to a fair and definitive settlement of the situation in Western Sahara in accordance with relevant United Nations resolutions, so that Morocco's military occupation of the region would not be allowed to succeed. He also welcomed the release of the last political prisoners and prisoners of war by the Frente POLISARIO and expressed the hope that the Government of Morocco would clarify the situation of 150 missing Saharan soldiers and 500 Saharans, who were victims of forced disappearance.

24. He also demanded: that an independent international medical mission be allowed to investigate the situation of Saharan political prisoners with a view to their release; that Morocco fulfil its obligations under article 2 of the Association Agreement between the European Union and the Kingdom of Morocco; and that the international community prevail on the Government of Morocco to act in good faith to put an end to the conflict. The fate of an entire people, which was faced with chronic illness, malnutrition and destruction of their cultural and social heritage, was the responsibility of the international community. The relevant resolutions must be implemented in order to put an end to an illegal military occupation and return Western Sahara to its people.

25. *Mr. Rodríguez withdrew.*

26. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Van der Veken (Belgian Committee of Support to Western Sahara) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

27. **Mr. Van der Veken** (Belgian Committee of Support to Western Sahara) said that he, together with representatives of other Belgian voluntary youth movements, had visited Saharan refugee camps in 2003 and 2004 and started the construction of a youth centre in Smara. That fully equipped centre would start operating in 2006 and its activities would consist of language courses, activities for children and even activities for disabled children. The national youth organization of the Saharans, UJSARIO, was providing programmes to teach young people how to take up their responsibilities in society when they returned to their rightful home. However, they had to be able to believe in that return; currently, there were very few prospects and virtually no paid jobs, so there was little pressure on young adults to assume their role in society.

28. Voluntary work should continue in the camps to try and give young people a chance to develop their talents and feel that they were needed by society. Many Saharans were discouraged and felt that the peace settlement had brought them very little. As long as they could not exercise their right of self-determination, it would be impossible to keep young people motivated. Young people could not be expected to take up responsibilities if they felt they had no prospects beyond a future of living in refugee camps. Two generations of Saharans had been lost because of the failure to help them in their search for self-determination. The United Nations should strive to find a just solution to the situation, before a third generation was lost.

29. *Mr. Van der Veken withdrew.*

30. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Teuwen (Oxfam Solidarity) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

31. **Ms. Teuwen** (Oxfam Solidarity) said that unfortunately, the situation of Saharan refugees had seriously deteriorated. The contributions from international agencies, particularly the World Food Programme (WFP) and the European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO) were inadequate in both terms of quantity and quality. Assistance was currently being provided to 158,000 refugees. At the beginning of 2005, however, WFP had carried out a nutritional study in the Saharan refugee camps which had shown

very alarming results: the overwhelming majority of pregnant women and children were anaemic and the figures for both global and chronic malnutrition were extremely high. Nearly one third of children were underweight and one third of very young children suffered from problems of growth.

32. Despite those findings, WFP had recently announced that it would substantially reduce its assistance to the Saharan people. Figures clearly showed that basic foodstuffs provided by WFP only sufficed during a crisis and were totally inadequate for an extended crisis situation as was the case in the Western Sahara. ECHO had previously provided supplementary assistance to help enrich and diversify the refugees' food basket. In 2003, it decided to change its approach and contribute to the WFP's budget rather than providing supplementary support. Although the European Parliament had unanimously adopted a resolution in April 2005 calling on ECHO to review its decision so that the Saharan refugees would have a wider range of foodstuffs, no decision had yet been taken on this matter.

33. Bilateral assistance from a number of countries, such as Algeria, Belgium, Italy and Spain, had always helped in the event of disruptions in supply and to enrich the food basket. Although that assistance was more necessary than ever, the change in the approach taken by ECHO was tempting other bilateral donors to revise their policy towards Saharan refugees. She appealed to donor Governments to resume or continue their efforts to help Saharan refugees and called upon the United Nations to continue to ensure that the refugees had adequate protection until such a time as settlement to the conflict had been reached.

34. *Ms. Teuwen withdrew.*

35. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Stanley (Manna Church) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

36. **Mr. Stanley** (Manna Church) said that he was the pastor of a local church in North Carolina and had been praying for the independence of Western Sahara since 1999. The time had come for the people of Western Sahara to exercise their right of self-determination, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV). He had visited the Tindouf refugee camps several times and found the Saharan people to be a unique, warm and forgiving people that the world needed to know and recognize. He strongly urged the

United Nations to end the current tragedy and enforce the decolonization of Western Sahara.

37. *Mr. Stanley withdrew.*

38. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Scholte (Defence Forum Foundation) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

39. **Ms. Scholte** (Defence Forum Foundation) said that while the United Nations had brought about a ceasefire to the conflict in Western Sahara in 1991, it had failed to fulfil its promise of a vote on self-determination by the Saharan people. Instead, the Saharan people had seen their country invaded by Morocco, their civilians brutally killed and their families separated for 30 years. The fact that the Saharan people preferred to live as free people in one of the most inhospitable places on earth rather than under Moroccan rule was a testament to the human spirit and the idea of freedom. It was also a testament to the cruelty of Morocco in its brutal occupation of Western Sahara.

40. The only viable solution to end the stalemate was to call upon Morocco to withdraw from Western Sahara and to organize a free and impartial referendum. That would bring about a Saharan republic that could flourish as a peaceful democratic State of Muslim progressives who renounced all forms of terror; the reunification of families separated for 30 years and the immediate reduction of the refugee population; stability and economic development in the Maghreb and a redirection of funds currently spent on Morocco's occupation forces in Western Sahara and Moroccan lobbyists around the world, to benefit the Moroccan people. A failure to persuade Morocco to leave Western Sahara would mean the continued subjugation of the Saharan people and would also prove to the Saharans that laying down their weapons and agreeing to the ceasefire had been a terrible mistake; and it would also show the world that the United Nations was not serious about its own purpose of ensuring that Saharans would have the right to exercise self-determination.

41. *Ms. Scholte withdrew.*

42. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Strömdahl (Swedish Western Sahara Committee) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

43. **Mr. Strömdahl** (Swedish Western Sahara Committee) said that Morocco continued to claim that

Western Sahara was the Moroccan Sahara and to confiscate maps showing the correct borders. The fact remained that two thirds of Western Sahara was still a colony, the last one in Africa. Moroccan leaders described the refugee camps outside Tindouf as prisons for poor South Moroccans sequestered by force, but any visitor to the camps knew that to be a lie and was impressed by the sound organization and democratic structure prevailing in those camps, despite a lack of resources. Moroccan propaganda reported that children in the camps had been taken away from their parents and sent for military training in Cuba. In fact, the Saharan education system was very effective with compulsive primary schools and total literacy in the camps; university training depended very much on the goodwill of Algeria, Spain, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and Cuba, and most of the university-trained students returned to the camps, despite a lack of jobs. Morocco did not allow any criticism of the camps; several groups of journalists and politicians had been denied entry or forced to leave the Territory.

44. Morocco must end the repression of Saharans in the occupied area. Political prisoners should be released and international observers and independent journalists free to work. An international investigation commission could be formed to study human rights conditions in the camps and in the occupied area. A political negotiated solution must be reached without delay. If Morocco continued to reject the Peace Plan, the only alternative was to go back to the settlement plan for Western Sahara. The Frente POLISARIO could not be asked to make any more concessions.

45. *Mr. Strömdahl withdrew.*

46. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Machin (University Las Palmas de Gran Canaria) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

47. **Mr. Machin** (University Las Palmas de Gran Canaria) said that, despite the two Baker Plans of 2001 and 2003, the situation in Western Sahara continued to be deadlocked because the root of the problem had not been addressed: Algeria and Morocco, both Member States of the United Nations and of the Arab Maghreb Union, should sit together at the negotiating table and work out a framework of action. First, the obstacles to the establishment of a stable, economically and politically viable Arab Maghreb Union should be eliminated, as that would benefit all the peoples of north-west Africa and guarantee sound relations with

Europe and the rest of the world, and greater autonomy should be established for Western Sahara, which could usher in a process of decentralization, that could be extended throughout the Maghreb. Second, it would be necessary to solve the problems of the Saharan population as a whole: not only those living within the Western Sahara but also those scattered throughout the world, especially in Mauritania. That step would be extremely sensitive as it would involve persons and families who had experienced different circumstances, and it would therefore need to be taken within a democratic framework and in full respect for human rights.

48. These proposals would not be easy to implement, as there were vested interests in all governmental and social sectors of the countries involved. Furthermore, hatred had been generated against persons and institutions, as was the case in all civilian conflicts. However, attempts should be made to rise above these considerations as all parties would benefit. Morocco's territorial unity would be safeguarded; Algeria would be relieved that an independent state in the Sahara had been avoided as it was, itself, not immune from a similar development; Tunisia, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and Mauritania would welcome the removal of a major obstacle to the creation of the Arab Maghreb Union; the European Union would view with satisfaction a more stable region in the south as that would stem the flow of sub-Saharan migrants to its countries; the United Nations would have achieved its main objective, preservation of world peace; and, finally, the Canary Islands would welcome a country across the seas that lived in peace and was integrated in a supranational environment. A further positive development would be that funds could be redirected to social and economic development rather than to the conflict.

49. *Mr. Machin withdrew.*

50. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Basinet took a place at the petitioners' table.*

51. **Ms. Basinet**, speaking as a private individual, said that the displaced Western Saharans' lack of security was militating against what they wanted for themselves as a society. Yet what the Saharan people had withstood for 30 years in pursuit of self-determination in the face of such opposition was a model for all.

52. *Ms. Basinet withdrew.*

53. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Hicks, representing Mr. Poe (United States House of Representatives), took a place at the petitioners' table.*

54. **Mr. Hicks**, representing **Mr. Poe** (United States House of Representatives), observed that 30 years after both the International Court of Justice and the United Nations had called for a referendum and upheld the right to self-determination in Western Sahara, the matter was still unresolved. While issues like the treatment of prisoners should be investigated, the central question remained the status of Western Sahara. The longer the United Nations failed to act to ensure the Saharan people's right of self-determination, as demanded by the Charter, the more difficult it would be to avoid a repetition of the tragic violence that had occurred in other territorial disputes. Other countries with border disputes, such as Eritrea and Ethiopia, Nigeria and Cameroon, and North and South Sudan, as well as countries outside Africa, were watching to see what precedent would be established in Western Sahara. Although the Frente POLISARIO was vastly outnumbered by the Moroccan military, the Saharans were resolute, for they were struggling for their land, their homes and their future. Tens of thousands had already voted with their feet and now lived in refugee camps, in the unforgiving Sahara desert, while their future was held hostage by foreign Powers.

55. **Mr. Idoko** (Nigeria) said that Mr. Hicks's reference to other border conflicts, among them the dispute between Nigeria and Cameroon, tended to obscure the important question before the Committee and the relevance of his presentation, which had otherwise been a valid one.

56. *Mr. Hicks withdrew.*

57. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Chauprade (Sorbonne University) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

58. **Mr. Chauprade** (Sorbonne University) said that he had come as an expert in international relations to argue for Morocco's legitimate claims in Western Sahara, on the basis not of ideology or politics, but of the facts. Morocco's links with its Saharan provinces went back to the unification of Greater Morocco in the 11th century; the southward extension of pre-colonial 16th to 18th-century Morocco was much greater than in modern times; the scattered Saharan tribes — mostly of north Moroccan origin — historically paid allegiance to the Moroccan kings, and five out of the

seven Moroccan dynasties themselves were of Saharan origin. Any legal justification of position on the question of Western Sahara had to be founded not on strategic claims but on the evidence of that long past that the Moroccan people saw as the essence of a Moroccan State extending, north to south, from Europe to sub-Saharan Africa, and that underlay Morocco's claim. That was the conviction that lay behind the many sacrifices that Morocco had made to bring literacy, irrigation and port facilities, and consequent employment, to its Saharan peoples.

59. The question of Western Sahara needed to be settled, for there were new and troubling developments in the area. In both the Sahara and the Sahel, experts in geopolitics were watching with apprehension the emergence of armed Islamist groups whose aim was to co-opt local problems to serve their religious fundamentalism and who were attracting adherents among marginalized nomadic tribes. In an Algerian newspaper interview, the leader of the Frente POLISARIO had acknowledged that some members of his own movement might be drawn to radical Islamism.

60. The key to resolving the question of Western Sahara was to allow Morocco and Algeria to find a solution together to what was not a colonial issue but a regional problem between their two countries. Failure to act quickly would open the door to extremism. Algeria must recognize Morocco's historical rights; Morocco must understand Algeria's geopolitical ambition to extend its borders to the Atlantic, and must give an appropriate sovereign response; the Saharan populations divided by the Berlin Wall of the Frente POLISARIO camps must be reunited so that they could work together to develop their province in keeping with their own identity. To govern was to choose, and the international community must opt for a balance of power between nation States that were strong because they had resolved their border problems and were able to combat international terrorism more effectively and better pursue their development.

61. *Mr. Chauprade withdrew.*

62. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. González Díaz (Asociación Saharaui para la Defensa de Derechos Humanos) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

63. **Mr. González Díaz** (Asociación Saharaui para la Defensa de Derechos Humanos) observed that the Western Sahara dispute was only one aspect of the

ongoing decolonization of North Africa. The chief victims of that conflict had been the Saharans living under Moroccan sovereignty within the 1979 frontiers; their rights had been sacrificed to policies and political agreements in which they had not been the main consideration. The question had been internationalized by the involvement of third countries, thus leading to armed confrontation. Meanwhile, Spain's geostrategic use of the Canary Islands to spearhead its colonial ambitions in North Africa by preserving its hold on other colonial enclaves in Morocco was violating the most basic rights of the people of those areas and of the entire region.

64. His organization called for a respect for the territorial integrity of Morocco and urged a resolution of the conflict, within the context of Moroccan sovereignty, using United Nations mediation to achieve the disbanding of the Tindouf camps through negotiations between the two parties, Algeria and Morocco. Algeria's proposal, to partition the disputed territory was a political absurdity because it irrevocably separated individuals, families and tribes and divided a Territory that was an integral whole; the aim was not to confer rights on the people involved but rather to satisfy those who wanted an independent republic separate from Morocco. European Governments, moreover, had no business taking part in the perpetuation of the conflict in pursuit of colonialist interests. The two parties concerned must be urged to settle the Western Sahara dispute politically, in a solution based on autonomy, with an effective transfer of power in accordance with international law. Such a transfer would be in keeping with the process of institutional decentralization and democratization that had been going on in the Kingdom since 1976. Also, in the interests of the larger decolonization of the region, Spain should enter into negotiations with Morocco over its control of its Northern African enclaves and should agree to the decolonization of the Canary Islands and the return of its inhabitants in the diaspora.

65. *Mr. González Díaz withdrew.*

66. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Travieso Darias (Asociación pro Derechos Humanos de Canarias) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

67. **Ms. Travieso Darias** (Asociación pro Derechos Humanos de Canarias) said that, with its brutal repression, Morocco had since 1975 been seriously and systematically violating the human rights of the

Saharan population living in the occupied territories of Western Sahara, creating a climate of terror. Over the past three years, in 10 visits to El Aaiun, her organization had been able to interview victims of anti-personnel mines, representatives of human rights associations, family members of disappeared persons and former political prisoners. Hundreds had disappeared or been jailed arbitrarily, including minors, and been subjected to torture or rape. Since 1975, 25 per cent of the Saharan female population in the occupied territories had been jailed, many of them not yet 16 years old, and their whereabouts in Moroccan secret jails was still unknown. None of them had been brought to trial. The Moroccan authorities had, moreover, turned a deaf ear to those demanding to know the whereabouts of over 500 of their relatives who had disappeared.

68. The Saharan population was peacefully demanding respect for its fundamental rights, respect for international law and the holding of a referendum of self-determination. Yet in reprisal, Morocco had in May and July 2005 dispatched a large contingent of police and soldiers to attack the population. Giving details of Moroccan atrocities against three Saharan human rights defenders, she noted that they were only three of the 37 who had been imprisoned. On their behalf, she pleaded for the world to hear their call for freedom and peace.

69. *Ms. Travieso Darias withdrew.*

70. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Rodríguez Rodríguez (Movimiento Canario de Solidaridad) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

71. **Mr. Rodríguez Rodríguez** (Movimiento Canario de Solidaridad) said that very few members of his organization had been able to enter the occupied territories, given the general policy of the occupying Power to deny entry to humanitarian organizations and even Spanish Government representatives. In the meantime, even as it was proclaiming its readiness to reach a negotiated solution to the question of Western Sahara, the Moroccan Government was cynically ceding the Saharan people's resources for exploitation by foreign corporations even though it had no rights whatsoever over those resources. At the same time, the people of the Territory lacked essential services and had to endure humiliating treatment by the Moroccan security forces. The danger was that the people living in such circumstances would begin to see armed

resistance as the only way out. The presence of MINURSO was a good thing, even though it was discredited among the population itself, who felt that it should be doing more. Members of the Mission were able to observe human rights violations, but their actions and their reports were too weak. MINURSO should be given more power to intervene, so as to prevent outbreaks of violence and human rights violations.

72. Work was being done by his organization in the camps in Tindouf, which housed 200,000 Saharan displaced persons or refugees. Despite the commendable work being done by public and private aid organizations in the camps, the task would never be completed until a settlement agreement was reached. The world could not look away from the sufferings of those in the camps, especially considering the logistical difficulties of attending to such a large population settled against their will in such an inhospitable site.

73. Unless the international community acted rapidly, intelligently and vigorously, the situation in Western Sahara might become irreversible. The Organization, at the risk of losing prestige, must find a way to force Morocco to stop flouting United Nations resolutions even as it declared itself to be a nation that respected democratic values. MINURSO should be given the personnel and resources to enforce those resolutions and guarantee human rights.

74. *Mr. Rodriguez Rodriguez withdrew.*

75. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Huff (Teach the Children International) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

76. **Ms. Huff** (Teach the Children International) said that over the past six years, she had watched as the men and women in the Saharan refugee camps had lost hope, leading to despondency and a breakdown in family structure. The women had suffered as they had taken up strong family roles in the absence of their husbands. A recent report published by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) revealed that children were approximately two inches shorter than their parents had been at the same age, which was attributable to nutritional deficiencies and harsh living conditions. The United Nations had the power to resolve the situation, but apparently the determination to go to the next level was lacking. Although petitioners were pleased that members of the Committee were willing to listen to the cry for help of

the Saharan people, it was now time to achieve justice for the Saharans and freedom for Western Sahara.

77. *Ms. Huff withdrew.*

78. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Lord Newall (International Committee for Prisoners of Tindouf), took a place at the petitioners' table.*

79. **Lord Newall** (International Committee for Prisoners of Tindouf) said that as the Chairman of that organization, he had visited Western Sahara, spoken with former prisoners of war and their families, and listened to testimony concerning human rights abuses, harsh living conditions, torture, forced labour and solitary confinement. In view of the flagrant violation of international human rights legislation, which had grave implications for Algeria, there was an urgent need to resolve the situation. First, an international inquiry must be held into the fate of the many people who had disappeared from the camps at Tindouf. Second, those responsible for human rights violations, including torture, must be brought to justice. Third, the Government of Algeria must provide compensation for the torture and abuse suffered by victims illegally imprisoned in its territory. Finally, the bodies of those who had died on Algerian soil while in prison must be recovered.

80. *Lord Newall withdrew.*

81. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Lenz, (Saharawi Children's Program) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

82. **Ms. Lenz** (Saharawi Children's Program) said that she had visited the refugee camps 17 times and that for the past six summers her organization had coordinated the stays of roughly 200 Saharan children with host families across the United States. Those children had candidly expressed their thoughts, feelings, experiences, and knowledge of the world they lived in. The organization had built an English school in the camps, at the invitation, and with the cooperation, of the Frente POLISARIO.

83. In recent months, Morocco had blatantly violated human rights by imprisoning and torturing Saharans living in occupied territory. Meanwhile, it was engaging in political manipulation of the media. The Saharans were striving to keep hope alive and continued to choose the methods of non-violent protest to make their plight heard. They were putting aside their individual pursuits and identity, and even their

former tribal divisions, to preserve their national identity as the people of Western Sahara. They wanted nothing more than true freedom in their homeland and under their own rule — not the freedom of a regime that had forced them from their homes.

84. *Ms. Lenz withdrew.*

85. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Bahaijoub (Family Protection) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

86. **Ms. Bahaijoub** (Family Protection), expressing concern over those who had disappeared from the prisons and camps in Tindouf, said that their fate was unknown and their disappearance constituted a flagrant violation of international law. The families of the disappeared had been unable to go through the natural grieving process and could not start to rebuild their lives. Fourteen years had passed since the explicit call by the United Nations to solve the question of the persons who had disappeared. Algeria had ignored that call, and was therefore in serious breach of Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949.

87. The Algerian authorities also had a responsibility to conduct an investigation into the Moroccan prisoners missing from the Tindouf camps. She appealed to them to cooperate with the Moroccan authorities, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Commission on Human Rights and Amnesty International to find out what happened to the people unaccounted for. At the same time, an independent investigation should be launched to clarify the circumstances of the forced disappearance of military and civilian persons. All the necessary measures should be taken to identify individuals responsible for inflicting torture and death and to bring them before a court of law, to be sentenced according to the seriousness of their crimes.

88. *Ms. Bahaijoub withdrew.*

89. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Stame Cervone (Christian Democratic Women International) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

90. **Ms. Stame Cervone** (Christian Democratic Women's International) said that the question of Western Sahara should have been resolved long ago on the basis of the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice. According to Muslim law, ties of loyalty formalized the sovereignty of the State. International law could not overlook that reality. In the

past, the Saharan people had always shown loyalty to the King of Morocco. The right to self-determination should not be used as a pretext to undermine the principle of territorial integrity. In that regard, the question arose as to why Algeria wanted to limit the existence of the Saharan people only to Moroccan territory, as if there were a difference between Moroccan and Algerian Saharans. It was time to end the masquerade and bring the Algerians to the negotiating table with Morocco.

91. Concerning the situation in the Tindouf refugee camps, testimony by survivors who had managed to flee was almost unbearable. One of the most tragic examples was the deportation of children from Tindouf to Cuba. Those deportations were rarely mentioned in the media and did not seem to interest non-governmental organizations. Upon arrival in Cuba, children's travel documents were taken away. They were sent to camps, where they were indoctrinated and given military training, and were exploited as labourers and servants. Their deportation was used by the Frente POLISARIO, with the support of Algeria, as a means of pressure to keep their parents in the camps at Tindouf. When the children returned to Tindouf, often after 10 years or more, the shock was terrible. Sometimes their parents had died, or had been mistreated for objecting to the deportations. The only way to solve the political dimensions of the conflict was through dialogue between Morocco and Algeria. The Algerian authorities could not shirk their moral, political and maternal responsibility.

92. *Ms. Stame Cervone withdrew.*

93. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Warburg (Freedom for All) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

94. **Ms. Warburg** (Freedom for All) said that fear and suspicion pervaded the Frente POLISARIO refugee camps, with the refugees living in constant fear of arbitrary punishment and abuse. The camps' revolutionary councils wielded supreme power and any suspicion of dissent was publicly and brutally punished, often with torture and imprisonment. To maintain and consolidate power, the Frente POLISARIO separated husbands and wives, parents and children. Children were trained to spy and inform on other refugees. Women were often forced to remarry against their will and/or to bear different men's children. Young women were removed from their families and systematically raped, living in isolation

until they gave birth. All boys from the age of 15 lived in military camps and were trained to fight. Humanitarian aid, provided by the international community for the welfare of the refugees, was sold illegally and the funds used to purchase weapons, in contravention of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

95. Even more shocking was the deportation, as punishment and a means of ensuring compliance, of young children aged 7 and 8 to Cuba, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Angola and Mozambique. While in exile, those children were often exploited, with many being forced to work in agriculture, in factories or as domestic servants. Although some of them eventually returned to the Frente POLISARIO camps, they often encountered problems in adjusting and reintegrating into Saharan society. The children and victims of conflict in Western Sahara looked to the United Nations to help end their suffering.

96. *Ms. Warburg withdrew.*

97. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Assor (Surrey Three Faiths Forum) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

98. **Mr. Assor** (Surrey Three Faiths Forum) drew attention to the embezzlement by the Frente POLISARIO of aid meant for refugees. It had been proven that funds for refugees had been illicitly re-routed for the benefit of the Frente POLISARIO. The Committee should grant his organization the possibility to investigate further in order to identify the guilty and restore honesty; an audit of the monies handed over and proper accounting procedures were also needed. The blockade of the refugee camps should be lifted so that his organization could enter the camps. Food donated by international non-governmental organizations had found its way to the markets of Nouadhibou in Mauritania. Re-routing of aid had even been reported in the Algerian press. Better management of that aid must be ensured by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and not by remote control from Algiers. The Frente POLISARIO had squandered more money on military projects than UNHCR had spent globally on refugees. An immediate investigation into the misappropriation of humanitarian aid was required.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.



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Summary record of the 5th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 10 October 2005, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Aliyev (Azerbaijan)
later: Mr. Gerts (Vice-Chairman) (Netherlands)

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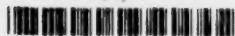
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05-54151 (E)



The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 26: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (Territories not covered under other agenda items) (continued)

Hearing of petitioners

Question of Western Sahara (A/C.4/60/5/Add.8, 27, 30, 31, 33, 34, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41 and 43)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Najab (Association des Ex-prisonniers de l'Intégrité Territoriale) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

2. **Mr. Najab** (Association des Ex-prisonniers de l'Intégrité Territoriale) said that he, a retired flying officer in the Moroccan Air Force and a former prisoner of war who had spent 25 years in captivity in Tindouf in Algeria, together with a further 2,000 former prisoners of war had formed the Association of which he was President. The suffering that they had experienced had deeply marked them, both physically and mentally and they would be unable to forget until reparation had been made for the harm done to them and until the perpetrators had been held to account. They had been kept for years in holes without roofs, exposed to the heat of summer and the cold of winter, in violation of articles 22, 23 and 25 of the Third Geneva Convention; had performed forced labour seven days a week in violation of articles 49, 51 and 53 of that Convention; had been forced to make false declarations against their country, their army and their institutions, and had been tortured for refusing to do so, in violation of articles 1, 12 and 13 of the same Convention; and had for long periods been prevented from corresponding with their families unless they agreed to start their letters with slogans hostile to their country, in violation of article 72 of the Convention. They had seen their comrades tortured to death, often after having been recaptured by Algerian forces following an attempted escape. Moreover, the officers had not been treated with the respect due to their rank, having often been made to look ridiculous in front of their men and forced to work in violation of articles 13, 44 and 49 of the Convention.

3. The United Nations was the greatest defender of liberty and of respect for international law and human rights. Since the ceasefire in 1991, the Security

Council had on four occasions called on Algeria to release all Moroccan prisoners unconditionally. Algeria had, however, turned a deaf ear, holding the prisoners as hostages and forcing them to perform slave labour, which was yet another violation of the Geneva Convention.

4. While all of the Moroccan prisoners registered by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) had now been released, the fate of a large number who had disappeared without trace had still to be determined. The same was true of civilians and of many children snatched from among the civilian population during attacks on various towns in 1979.

5. Because the prisoners had been held on Algerian soil — at Tindouf in the south and near Algiers in the north — Algeria was simultaneously the Detaining Power and the Protecting Power with respect to the Moroccan prisoners of war, as stipulated in articles 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16 of the Third Geneva Convention. Consequently, Algeria was responsible for the inhumane treatment and torture that those prisoners had endured for more than 25 years. It was, moreover, incumbent on the Algerian authorities to return the remains of hundreds of Moroccan prisoners of war who had died from torture or disease on Algerian territory, and to answer before the International Criminal Court with respect to such acts of violence committed in violation of the Conventions and of international law. No fewer than 50 articles of the Third Geneva Convention had been violated by the "Algerisario" in its treatment of prisoners of war. He used the word "Algerisario" because it had been Algerian military security officers who had interrogated him at Algerian army headquarters in Tindouf. If Algeria claimed not to be involved, then it should say why it had agreed to hold Moroccan prisoners on its territory, at Tindouf, and why it had taken 460 Moroccan prisoners, including several officers, to army headquarters near Algiers. Algeria could not deny having exchanged 150 Moroccan prisoners of war for 106 of its officers and men captured during the battle of Amgala in 1976; if it had no claims to the Sahara, then it should now tell the international community what its troops were doing in the Sahara, in Mahbes, Bir Lahlou and elsewhere. Algeria must also justify its refusal to free all the 460 prisoners that it held at Blida, and explain why it had sent 273 of them to the Tindouf camps, into the hands of the Frente POLISARIO. As a State party to the First Protocol to the Geneva Convention, Algeria had

committed a grave offence by not releasing all the Moroccan prisoners of war, military and civilian. During their detention in the north, the 460 prisoners had been without news of their families, because the Algerian authorities had refused to allow the International Committee of the Red Cross to visit them, in violation of the Geneva Convention. Finally, Algeria should explain why it had not reacted to the assertion made by Mr. Ould Khadad, the Frente POLISARIO coordinator with the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), on the Al-Jazeera television station, that the Moroccan prisoners were in liberated areas, and not on Algerian soil. Could it be said that Tindouf and Blida, south of Algiers, were in territory liberated by the Frente POLISARIO?

6. Representatives of several non-governmental organizations who had addressed the Committee in support of the Frente POLISARIO had visited the camps and interviewed the prisoners, but not one of them had thought to call for their release, even when they knew the extent of their suffering.

7. *Mr. Najah withdrew.*

8. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Ruddy (United States Ambassador (retired)) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

9. **Mr. Frank Ruddy** (United States Ambassador (retired)) said that, over the past 30 years, various specious arguments had been put forward to make Morocco's land grab acceptable to the international community. The invasion of Western Sahara had been called the "Green March", as if calling an invasion by the name of a colour respected in Islam somehow justified it. Morocco, which had railed against Spain's colonization of Western Sahara, now replaced Spain as the new colonizer. It had sought an opinion from the International Court of Justice and the Court had denied its right to sovereignty over the area. Morocco had then invaded the Territory, asserting that the International Court of Justice somehow supported its position. That was patently not the case. Furthermore, the Security Council had twice condemned the invasion, but Morocco continued defiantly to colonize and terrorize Western Sahara.

10. After the ceasefire in 1991, the United Nations had set up a peacekeeping mission, MINURSO, to supervise a referendum intended to allow the people of Western Sahara to decide whether to be free or to be

part of Morocco. He himself had begun the work on the referendum in earnest, but Morocco had sabotaged it, with the help of an ineffective representative of the Secretary-General. The Moroccans had effectively taken control of MINURSO, screening and eliminating voters and terrorizing the local population. Once they had seen the desire of the Saharans to reject unity with Morocco, however, the Moroccans had seen to it that there would never be a referendum. Now there was a plan under which Morocco would rule Western Sahara for a certain period of time, and there would then be a referendum. While discussions continued on the legal niceties as to whether members of one tribe or another should be allowed to vote, Morocco was sending thousands of subsidized Moroccan citizens into Western Sahara to strengthen its hold there.

11. The common law doctrine of *res ipsa loquitur* held that where the accused's fault was obvious merely by a recitation of the facts, no proof was necessary. A recitation of Morocco's crimes, its invasion of Western Sahara, its occupation and colonization over 30 years, and its cynical destruction of a referendum set up by the United Nations to settle the question, spoke for themselves and testified to Morocco's guilt. Morocco had acted lawlessly, and the question was whether the United Nations was willing or able to restrain its lawlessness. Shamefully, the answer so far had been an unequivocal "No".

12. *Mr. Ruddy withdrew.*

13. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Rachid (Conseil Consultatif pour Le Sahara) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

14. **Mr. Rachid** (Conseil Consultatif pour Le Sahara) said that the file on decolonization in Western Sahara ought to have been closed when the Spanish army had withdrawn in 1975. The rulers of Algeria had, however, insisted on using the Frente POLISARIO to pursue their own hegemony in the region on the pretext of defending the right to self-determination. It was in fact Morocco that had been lobbying for self-determination in Western Sahara since before the Frente POLISARIO had even existed, while Algeria had been trying ever since 1975 to use military force, diplomacy, propaganda, and exploitation of the suffering of refugees to stir up tensions that had never existed. The Saharan people had been united in their desire to maintain their traditional allegiance to the Moroccan throne and had done all they could to

facilitate the work of MINURSO, while Algeria and the Frente POLISARIO had tried to prevent the Identification Commission established by Security Council resolution 725 (1991) from registering thousands of tribesmen to participate in the referendum. Morocco had, in the course of several international meetings, demonstrated its responsiveness to Security Council resolution 1309 (2000) and expressed its desire for a permanent solution that would provide for Morocco's sovereignty and territorial integrity within a decentralized framework that would conform to the wishes of the inhabitants of Western Sahara. Algeria's proposed partition of Western Sahara between Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO — which demonstrated Algeria's disregard for the residents of Western Sahara and the principle of self-determination — was not even worth discussing, and the new proposal of the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General had returned the conflict to square one.

15. The majority of Western Saharans in the Sagua el-Hamra, the Rio de Oro, and other parts of the Kingdom of Morocco, not to mention the thousands of people of Saharan origin whose files Algeria and the Frente POLISARIO would not permit the Identification Commission to open, believed that the fairest solution would be self-government, as proposed by His Majesty Mohammed VI in his latest Coronation Day speech, within the framework of the national and territorial sovereignty and unity of the Kingdom of Morocco.

16. *Mr. Rachid withdrew.*

17. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Ait Baala (Euro-Mediterranean Women's Committee) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

18. Ms. Ait Baala (Euro-Mediterranean Women's Committee) said that she wished to draw attention to the 30 years of silence from the international community on the tragic situation of a people subjected to inhuman and degrading conditions, namely the Moroccan people detained in the Tindouf camps, on Algerian territory, who had become hostages in a never-ending conflict between Morocco and Algeria despite the ceasefire of September 1991.

19. Whatever view one took of the conflict, nothing could justify the situation in the camps. She wondered how the international community could look on as tens of thousands of women and children, the elderly and the young continued to live in tents in utter poverty, in

the heart of one of the most inhospitable regions of the planet. They were living in an intolerable situation, surrounded by Algerian military security personnel, with their movements, even inside the camps, subject to military regulations, in flagrant contradiction of the conditions established for the mission of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which was not mandated to act within militarized zones. Bereft of international protection, those people were subject to the whim of an armed militia, under the direction of the Algerian regular army, which had committed criminal atrocities. An accusation of crimes against humanity and war crimes had been referred to the International Criminal Court; it had been found to be admissible and would lead to the prosecution of those in Algeria who were responsible.

20. It was a proven fact that no one knew the actual number of people living in the Tindouf camps. The Algerian authorities had never allowed UNHCR to survey the population in order to assess its needs. The people in the camps, whom Algeria described to the international community as refugees, did not meet the criteria set out in article I of the United Nations Convention on Refugees of 28 July 1951. In fact, the Saharan people living in the Tindouf camps had never been persecuted in their original homeland. The great majority of the Saharans who had remained there, or the former members of the Frente POLISARIO who had been able to return to their homeland after fleeing the Tindouf camps at the risk of their lives, were proof that there was no discrimination. Some former members of the Frente POLISARIO who had fled the Tindouf camps were currently present in the United Nations. She urged members of the Committee to meet them; they would learn that the image of refugees presented by Algeria was a fabrication which made it possible for Algeria to sequester populations and shamelessly to divert international humanitarian aid for propaganda purposes. The international press was full of stories about the diversion of international humanitarian aid, in particular that provided by ECHO via the World Food Programme concerning the sad fate of Saharan children deported to Cuba and the illicit smuggling of weapons and cigarettes. Nothing, however, had any impact on Algeria.

21. She drew attention to a report by the *Fondation Francis Lieber* which gave ample evidence of the torture perpetrated in the camps and made it clear that

the Frente POLISARIO had committed flagrant violations of human rights, with regard to both civilian and military prisoners. It was all the more disquieting to observe that such crimes had been perpetrated by a signatory to the Geneva Conventions, namely Algeria, which was sheltering, funding, arming and manipulating that band of criminals, while providing them with total protection. Given that situation, she asked what credibility could be granted to a State which claimed to defend such sacred principles, when its hands were stained with so many crimes. She wondered what credit could be accorded to a country that authorized a band of assassins to perpetrate such ignoble crimes on its own territory and with the complicity of its own security services and what trust could be placed in a country that allowed a part of its territory to be beyond all judicial control, the only law applied being that of terror.

22. The ideological packaging and the slogans trotted out repeatedly by the Algerian propaganda machine unfortunately did not in any way change the bitter reality prevailing in the Tindouf camps. Elsewhere in the world the major Powers had intervened and humanitarian non-governmental organizations (NGOs) had carried out protest campaigns in less dire situations, but no one was allowed into the Tindouf camps without the approval of the Algerian security forces, an approval that was granted only to certain NGOs which agreed to see in the camps nothing but an exotic scene of children playing barefooted on the sand dunes. Those obsessed with the archaic past were so pre-occupied by their pseudo-revolutionary fantasy that they were unwilling to look reality in the face, despite the proofs and the markings on maps supplied to them by those who had escaped from the camps. They had even closed their eyes to the torture centres and mass graves at Tindouf, and to the fact that the projects that they had financed had been implemented by Moroccan prisoners of war in flagrant violation of international conventions. That was indeed a shameful complicity.

23. Algeria, which for 30 years had been harassing Morocco, should think back to the unconditional support provided by the Moroccan authorities to Algeria in its struggle for independence and territorial integrity against the French plan for a referendum on self-determination for the Tuareg of the Algerian Sahara. Ironically, some 10 years after independence, Algeria had taken that same plan and set out to apply it in the territory of its Moroccan neighbour, claiming

that it was merely defending the right of the Saharan people to self-determination. Algeria seemed to forget that Morocco also had the right to defend its territorial integrity in accordance with General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV). It was clear that, using self-determination as a screen, Algeria was using the Frente POLISARIO to divide the Moroccan nation with the sole aim of satisfying its own geostrategic interest in the Sahara, and was mortgaging the future of all the people of the Maghreb.

24. The stability and security of the wider Saharan region were endangered and there was a threat to the whole balance of the region. Major damage had already been done in the southern part of Algeria, and in Mauritania, Chad and elsewhere. According to the most qualified experts, the region of the Sahara was in danger of becoming a hotbed of international terrorism and a serious threat, not only to the countries of the Maghreb but also to Europe and to the stability of the whole world. Violations of human rights, the diversion of humanitarian aid and plans for hegemony over the Sahara as a whole — that was the reality being orchestrated by Algeria. She appealed for measures to make Algeria respect international law in conformity with its international commitments, for its responsibility in the Saharan conflict to be recognized and for the role of the Algerian army in the Tindouf camps to be unequivocally condemned.

25. *Ms. Ait Boula withdrew.*

26. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Ebhi (COREFASA) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

27. **Ms. Ebhi (COREFASA)** said that she wished to express the profound concern of many of her compatriots regarding the heartbreaking conditions under which hundreds of thousands of people were living in the Tindouf camps. It was 30 years since one of the most pointless conflicts of modern times had been unleashed and its devastating effects, in particular, instability and deep despair were well known. It was time to assess the situation; unfortunately, the balance was tragic in terms of human and material losses.

28. The tens of thousands of Saharans in the Tindouf camps living in inhumane conditions were subject to the authority of a group that had abrogated to itself the title of "sole legitimate representative of the Saharan people". Any disagreement with that totalitarian group was brutally silenced, in a clear violation of human

rights that should not leave the international community unmoved and that should not remain unpunished. More than 8,000 Saharan people had left the Tindouf camps, fleeing from the mental and physical repression and persecution of the leader of the Frente POLISARIO, Mohamed Abdelaziz, and his repressive apparatus that received its instructions from Algeria's military security.

29. She called attention to the diversion of humanitarian aid, which, instead of reaching its destination, was pillaged for the illicit profit of the leadership of the separatist movement. As an eyewitness to the facts, who had lived for 16 years under the extreme conditions prevailing in the Tindouf refugee camps, she denounced the way in which women and children were treated, the former being compelled to perform forced labour and the latter being indoctrinated from a very early age. The slogans with which the children were indoctrinated — "Martyrdom for the whole country", "We shall seize freedom with a gun" — represented a flagrant violation of the rights of the child, as provided for in the Charter of the United Nations.

30. The conflict in Western Sahara was an essential element in the destabilization of the region. The discord between the parties would rapidly endanger the fragile cessation of hostilities, which had been achieved after much struggle. If the truce was broken, the consequences would be unpredictable and would have an adverse effect on the entire North African region.

31. She thanked the Secretary-General for his untiring efforts to resolve the conflict, and appealed to the entire international community to support the current efforts to reach a peaceful, fair and lasting solution under the auspices of the United Nations, and to put an end to the pain and suffering of thousands of families trapped in Algerian territory and return them to their homeland, Morocco.

32. *Ms. Gajmoula Ebhi withdrew.*

33. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Sidati (Institut des Etudes Africaines) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

34. **Mr. Sidati** (Institut des Etudes Africaines) said that he had learned from personal experience that the Frente POLISARIO did not exist as an independent organization but rather was an instrument created,

financed, coordinated and directed by Algeria. In its diplomatic offices and embassies throughout the world, no action was ever taken without consultation with an Algerian ambassador or with an official of Algerian military security.

35. As a former ambassador of the Frente POLISARIO to Italy, he had organized, in conjunction with a number of Italian NGOs, a caravan of humanitarian assistance for the camps in Western Sahara. The ambassador of Algeria to Italy, however, had telephoned to instruct him to cease all assistance activities and instead to participate in a demonstration denouncing the Embassy of Morocco in Rome. He had found himself in an embarrassing position with respect to the Italian non-governmental organizations and the Saharan refugees in need of food and medicines, and had personally expressed his dissatisfaction to the Algerian authorities. Their only concern, however, had been that he should convince the Italian non-governmental organizations to demonstrate with the Algerians. Those orders had been issued by the Algerian security commander Mahfoud, who controlled everything in the Embassy in much the same way that his counterparts controlled the camps.

36. As a man who valued freedom, he could not continue to be part of an organization that was run by Algeria and allowed no freedom of decision-making. To continue as a member of the Frente POLISARIO would be to defy the very principle of self-determination that was supposedly its *raison d'être*. He had taken the decision independently, free from moral, economic or political pressure, to return to his country of origin, Morocco, and join the thousands of native Moroccan Saharans who had opted to remain in the Saharan provinces of Morocco.

37. Those Saharans whom Algeria had forced to live in the Tindouf refugee camps longed to be reunited with their families. Only a fraction of the military assistance provided to them actually reached its destination; most of the supplies were being sold in the markets of neighbouring countries, where smuggling and trafficking in arms and drugs were taking place, giving rise to an increase in illegal clandestine immigration to Europe. The many Algerians who also lived in the camps, including the leaders of the Frente POLISARIO, were indifferent to the situation of the Saharan refugees and cared even less about reaching a peaceful settlement to their problem, which could only

be achieved through integration in their native country, Morocco.

38. *Mr. Sidati withdrew.*

39. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Fecci (Paris Tempo Productions) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

40. **Ms. Fecci** (Paris Tempo Productions) said that her work in recent years on the documentary film entitled "Western Sahara, Africa's Lost Colony", had brought her into close contact with Saharan refugee families struggling to maintain their dignity in difficult conditions. They were, for the most part, non-political and highly educated people — doctors, nurses, engineers and teachers — and women played an impressive role in the civil society they had created for themselves in the camps.

41. Everything in their lives had become permanently temporary, in a pattern of raised expectations and disillusionment. So many times, they had put their lives and their plans on hold — after the initiation of the identification process for a referendum that had never happened and during the negotiations conducted by Mr. Baker. Even the family visit programme organized by UNHCR had been sorely disappointing.

42. At the root of the problem was Morocco's refusal to accept the negotiated settlement plan and allow the referendum on self-determination to be held. Its intransigence had become a de facto annexation of the Territory without an act of self-determination. Despite the best efforts of MINURSO, it seemed that the Moroccan Government wished nothing more than a continuation of the status quo, in the hope that eventually the refugees would grow tired and find ways either to emigrate to third countries or accept Moroccan authority.

43. The people of Western Sahara were strong in their determination to exercise their rights and many believed that the United Nations had failed to keep its promises. The international community's failure to resolve the current impasse could lead to even greater disaster. The Saharans were a peaceful people and did not wish to return to war, but growing frustration and lack of progress might well convince the younger generation that armed struggle was the only solution.

44. *Ms. Fecci withdrew.*

45. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Abdelkader (Personnalité Sahraouie, ex-ministre du POLISARIO) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

46. **Mr. Abdelkader** (Personnalité Sahraouie, ex-ministre du POLISARIO) said the Frente POLISARIO should not be considered a genuine political movement seeking a solution to the problem of Western Sahara, because it was in every respect under the control of Algeria. Algeria had even proposed the alternative of partition, which demonstrated that it did not truly care about upholding the right to self-determination, but was concerned with its own hegemony in the region. Algeria had defied all human rights laws by using the sufferings of Moroccan families as a bargaining chip until American and international pressure forced their release. It had prevented human rights organizations, including UNHCR from bringing aid to refugees. Algeria had isolated every official of the Frente POLISARIO who had attempted to act independently and had tried to obscure the historical record of its 1988 takeover and purge of the Frente POLISARIO. It was strange that UNHCR had not devoted more attention to helping refugees to escape the hell of the Tindouf camps. Everyone knew that residents of southern Morocco lived in peace, freedom and security in their homeland, and that a vast majority of Saharans desired now more than ever to remain under Moroccan sovereignty. Algeria's Machiavellian behaviour notwithstanding, that was the only solution that would allow security and stability to triumph over tribal and factional conflict.

47. As a former Minister both of Justice and of the Interior for the Frente POLISARIO, he affirmed that the Tindouf camps were prisons run by immoral gangs which trafficked in arms, drugs and human beings, and that some of the leaders of the Frente POLISARIO who claimed political legitimacy were afraid of a political solution because they feared being called to account for murdering innocent people and stealing humanitarian aid. He appealed to the international community to exert pressure on Algeria to accept the desire of the Saharans to live under Moroccan sovereignty. That would help the greater Arab Maghreb to confront tribal struggle, regional conflict, instability and extremist terrorist movements.

48. *Mr. Abdelkader withdrew.*

49. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Hansen (Norwegian Support Committee for Western Sahara) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

50. **Mr. Hansen** (Norwegian Support Committee for Western Sahara) said that, in July 2005, human rights observers from the Norwegian Support Committee had been detained, threatened, and expelled by a force of some 250 Moroccan police officers, many of them armed. The human rights observers had been sent to El Aaiún to attend the trial of 16 Saharans arrested for protesting against Moroccan oppression. Only hours after their arrival, one of their contacts, Mr. Latif Allal, had been arrested and tortured by the Moroccan police. Another contact, Mr. Brahim Noumira, had been severely tortured in Moroccan jails, although he had not been convicted of any crime. Many others had met similar fates.

51. A statement from some of the courageous and respected representatives of the people of Western Sahara — Aminatou Haidar, Ali Salem Tamek, Lidri Elhoucine and 33 others — being held in the infamous Black Prison in El Aaiún was being circulated to Committee members. They had been arrested by Moroccan security forces for their participation in a series of largely peaceful demonstrations in May, June and July 2005, and most of them had been subjected to prolonged interrogation, beatings, torture, or other degrading treatment, threats of rape or murder, forced feeding or injections while on hunger strike, isolation and deportation to Moroccan jails. In their message, the Saharan political prisoners claimed that the judicial police proceedings and accusations against them were completely unfounded, and that they had been convicted in mock trials orchestrated for overtly political motives. Moroccan political parties and the mass media were carrying out ferocious smear campaigns against them, and Moroccan medical staff in the hospitals and clinics in Western Sahara often refused to treat Saharan victims of police brutality, or to issue medical certificates to prove that they had been subjected to torture. The Moroccan authorities continued to violate human rights in Western Sahara despite appeals by international human rights organizations such as Amnesty International and the World Organization against Torture.

52. The Saharan political prisoners therefore appealed to the United Nations to guarantee the Saharan people their right to self-determination, to protect them from the repressive Moroccan apparatus,

to protect Saharan human rights activists, to bring about the immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners being held in jails and to urge the Moroccan authorities to allow international observers and the mass media to enter Western Sahara.

53. The fate of the political prisoners was crucial to the work of the United Nations in Western Sahara. Those prisoners were promoting the implementation of United Nations resolutions through peaceful means; they enjoyed the strong support, sympathy and confidence of the Saharan people; they were laying the foundations for future peaceful coexistence between a decolonized Western Sahara and Morocco; and their incarceration prevented them from exerting a calming, moderating influence on young protesters.

54. Continued Moroccan occupation of Western Sahara not only threatened the peace and stability of the entire Maghreb region but also undermined the credibility of the United Nations. While the international community was procrastinating, the people of Western Sahara were paying with their freedom and their lives. He therefore called for an immediate halt to the repression of the Saharans, and for an end to the physical blockade of Western Sahara and, ultimately, its occupation.

55. *Mr. Hansen withdrew.*

56. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Oksalampi (YAKAARE-REDHRIC) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

57. **Ms. Oksalampi** (YAKAARE-REDHRIC) welcomed the release, on 18 August 2005, of the 404 long-term prisoners, 14 years after the ceasefire concluded in 1991 under the auspices of the United Nations. YAKAARE-REDHRIC, an organization that fought impunity, called for an international investigation into the fate of all Moroccan prisoners of war who had disappeared in the Tindouf camps, and for the prosecution of those responsible for human rights violations in the camps, namely the Frente POLISARIO and Algeria. Prisoners of war and the families of prisoners who had died in the Tindouf camps must be compensated; and the remains of those who had died in Algeria must be recovered and returned to their families. She expressed grave concern about the fate of approximately 200 Moroccan military personnel and civilians who were still being held in the Tindouf camps, according to lists drawn up by the International Committee of the Red Cross in Geneva.

58. She feared that the Frente POLISARIO was forcing members of minor tribes and black Africans into the hard labour until recently carried out by the Moroccan political prisoners who had been released. Having worked for 15 years for a Swiss organization which supported the Frente POLISARIO, she knew that the movement did not address the issues of tribalism, slavery or racism, and that those issues were totally taboo in the refugee camps. Some Saharan families had actually brought slaves with them — all black Africans — to the Tindouf camps. Recently, YAAKAARE-REDHRIC had learned from a reliable source that, at the outbreak of the armed conflict in 1975, approximately 150-200 black African slaves from the former Spanish Sahara had fled to Tindouf in search of a better life, but had been imprisoned and tortured by the military security army of the Frente POLISARIO.

59. Conscientious objectors were another target of discrimination. Approximately 30 persons from minority tribes who had been conscripted but had refused to return to the front in 1982, had been imprisoned and tortured. Their fate was still unknown.

60. She warned human rights and humanitarian organizations which provided assistance to refugees that they might one day be viewed as accomplices in the torture inflicted by the Frente POLISARIO and Algeria, a country which was a signatory of the Geneva Conventions. For example, France Libertés, a French non-governmental organization had for years provided substantial humanitarian assistance to Saharan refugees before learning that the Frente POLISARIO was abusing Moroccan prisoners of war. Moreover, the pensions of Saharan soldiers who had retired from the Spanish army were being diverted by the Saharan authorities in the camps.

61. According to various accounts and first-hand observations by YAAKAARE-REDHRIC, black African civilians in the Tindouf camps lived under extremely difficult conditions, with little access to education, medical care or leadership positions. She called for an investigation into the fate of Mauritanian black African prisoners who had been captured by the Frente POLISARIO in the armed conflict of 1975 to 1979, including Mr. Baïdy Diop, brother of eminent linguist Mr. Mamadou Samba Diop. The fate of hundreds of Saharan civilians who had disappeared in the camps since the outbreak of the conflict must also be determined.

62. In conclusion, she said that the human rights violations could only be put to an end through direct negotiations between Morocco and Algeria.

63. *Ms. Oksalampi withdrew.*

64. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Boukhari (Frente POLISARIO) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

65. **Mr. Boukhari** (Frente POLISARIO) said that, 30 years after its illegal invasion and occupation of Western Sahara, Morocco had still not honoured the commitment it had undertaken in accepting the 1991 settlement plan. It had reneged on its promise to hold a referendum on self-determination, offered by Mr. Karim Laamrani, the Prime Minister of Morocco at the time, and had rejected the peace plan for self-determination of the people of Western Sahara (the Baker plan), proposed by the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy, Mr. James Baker, in January 2003.

66. It was unfortunate that the European Union had expressed an intention of signing an illegal fisheries agreement with Morocco. That agreement involved Saharan waters and was understood by the people of Western Sahara as encouraging Morocco's obstruction of United Nations efforts to secure their self-determination. He hoped that the European Union would reconsider its decision and urge Morocco to respect international law and human rights in conformity with the provisions of the Association Agreement it had signed.

67. The Frente POLISARIO had done everything in its power to bring about the decolonization of Western Sahara. It had respected the ceasefire, accepted the settlement plan, the Houston Accords and the Baker plan, and had responded favourably to appeals by the Security Council and the General Assembly to release all Moroccan prisoners of war, even though they were members of an invading army that had sown terror in Western Sahara. Far from reciprocating the good faith shown by the Frente POLISARIO, the Moroccan authorities had not altered their position on Saharan prisoners of war and the hundreds of civilians who had disappeared. They had even stepped up human rights violations in the occupied territories, particularly towards the prisoners of conscience who were on a hunger strike.

68. Morocco's absurd proposals for autonomy and administrative decentralization, which were designed

to cover up its intransigence, were not an alternative to self-determination. The path to peace was clearly outlined in the settlement plan and the Baker plan. To ignore them, or to disregard the right of the Saharan people to self-determination would create a dangerous vacuum and give rise to a situation that could degenerate into war and chaos. The forthcoming visit to the region by the new Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. van Walsum, would be an occasion for the international community to determine whether Morocco was prepared to reverse its long-standing attitude of non-cooperation and obstruction of peace.

69. *Mr. Boukhari withdrew.*

70. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Bouh (Former member of the political bureau of the Frente POLISARIO) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

71. **Mr. Bouh** (Former member of the political bureau of the Frente POLISARIO) said that he had been a member of the political bureau of the Frente POLISARIO, director general of the political commissariat of its army, director general of its radio, governor of the Aousserd and Dakhla wilayas in the Tindouf camps, and finally director of protocol of the Office of the President.

72. The Committee had been led to believe that there was an issue of decolonization involved. In reality, the battle joined was for Algeria's hegemony in the region. In laying claim to its own portion of the Sahara, Morocco had acted within its rights under international law. Algeria had always claimed to be in favour of any solution that would enable Morocco to reclaim its Territories from Spain, the colonial Power. In reality, from 1975 onwards Algeria had plotted against Morocco and provided military, financial and diplomatic support to the Frente POLISARIO, and it had been a military presence in the Sahara since the withdrawal of Spanish forces. Algeria had inspired the idea of creating a Saharawi republic on Frente POLISARIO territory in the Tindouf area, and in 1976 had appointed its own man, Mr. Mohamed Abdelaziz, to the post of Secretary-General of the Frente POLISARIO. Algerian military security had been involved in the aftermath of the four major purges within the organization in the seventies and eighties, and in putting down the camp revolt of 1988. All action taken by the Frente POLISARIO had in reality been initiated, and sometimes even imposed on the

movement, by Algeria. Indeed, Algeria had suggested to Mr. James Baker that the solution to the problem of the Sahara lay in partitioning the Territory.

73. Algeria was fully responsible vis-à-vis the international community for everything that was occurring on its territory, and therefore for the fate of the 40,000 people living in absolute poverty in the Tindouf camps, for the deaths and disappearances, and for the sufferings of women and children there. The application made UNHCR to conduct a census in order to improve the supervision of food distribution had been refused.

74. The principle of self-determination was in danger of being abused by Algeria. Those who had drafted the provisions of United Nations resolution 1514 (XV) had shown wisdom and foresight when they had limited that principle in order to prevent its exploitation for the purpose of destroying countries and dispersing peoples. Contrary to propaganda, most people in the Sahara had never been to the Tindouf camps, but were working and living peacefully in the southern part of Morocco, and over 40 Saharawis were currently serving as elected representatives in the national Parliament.

75. The international community had recently supported the idea of a negotiated solution which would be mutually acceptable to the parties concerned. Morocco had confirmed its willingness to grant the Sahara extensive autonomy within the framework of national sovereignty; that constituted real progress towards a solution and the formula had been accepted by the majority of Saharawis. Many in the leadership of the Frente POLISARIO were aware that their separatist ideas were unattainable and could lead to civil war, and he urgently appealed to his former friends and brothers in the movement to join in healing the wounds of the past and in building a better future. An autonomous Sahara would constitute the best guarantee of stability in the region and of safety in the Mediterranean. He urged an end to the conflict in order that the weapons made available by Algeria to the Frente POLISARIO should not further promote terrorism in the region.

76. He warned the non-governmental organizations which supported the Frente POLISARIO of their liability for the crimes committed against the people in the camps, and invited the supporters of the Frente POLISARIO and Algeria to see through the slick

packaging to the suffering and human rights abuses it concealed.

77. *Mr. Boudh withdrew.*

Question of New Caledonia (A/C.4/60/4)

78. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Wamytan (Front de libération national kanak socialiste (FLNKS)) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

79. **Mr. Wamytan** (Front de libération national kanak socialiste (FLNKS)), speaking also as a representative of a committee for the management of natural resources and two Kanak organizations for the defence of Kanak interests against the international mining companies, said that independence was his country's non-negotiable aim and it had signed the Nouméa Accord with a view to ending colonial rule, in line with the stated policy of the United Nations. The Accord was therefore an international agreement within the meaning of international law, intended to involve the Kanaks, in particular in the transition mechanism to prepare for the future State and to promote political and economic emancipation and the emergence of a common awareness within the context of Caledonian citizenship. Five years later, France continued to pursue and fund the policy of European settlement despite the promises made in 1988 by senior politicians, including the Prime Minister, Mr. Michel Rocard. Major metallurgical projects and tax breaks had stimulated immigration, mainly to the South Province. That was a well-known scenario which ultimately implied the possibility of partition of New Caledonia. Kanak society was being fragmented and its people, particularly some of its young people, were increasingly marginalized and excluded from a society developing towards the French model. Kanak children had not thrived in the French schooling and university systems and the success rate in obtaining professional qualifications was very low. Despite the provisions of the Nouméa Accord, there was as yet no law to protect the local workforce; the number of Kanaks who were successful in the civil service examinations had declined drastically, while the implementation in the private sector of provisions for training Kanak managers was far from adequate, further stimulating immigration.

80. The sum of SUS 1.1 million allocated in 2005 to the Rural and Land Development Agency for land purchases to meet the needs in the peri-urban areas was

totally inadequate, and the Kanak leaders were fixing French justice for defending their land. There was no environmental legislation, mining regulations dated back to the 1950s, the country had been plundered for 125 years, over 2 million tons of nickel had been mined and no compensation had been paid to the local communities.

81. A pivotal point of the Nouméa Accord had been the provision that persons who had arrived after 1998 would be excluded from voting in provincial elections. That provision had not been implemented, despite promises made by Mr. Jacques Chirac in 2003. Moreover, the discussions on electoral reform had been postponed until early in 2006, and the timetable might be further affected by the forthcoming French presidential election in 2007.

82. The right to self-determination and the viability of the emerging Kanak State were threatened by increased plundering of the country's natural resources. The trend was towards more control of the economy. The only sector in which Kanaks were active was in mining, essentially as a result of political action and the proximity of nickel deposits to areas under traditional influence. The provisions in the Nouméa Accord calling for a mining plan, environmental regulations and a transparent mining policy to be in place by 1 January 2004 had not been implemented. If the stated goals of the three major metallurgical projects were achieved, New Caledonia would produce 1.5 million tons of nickel ore in the period 2009 to 2019. The South Province and France had placed major waivers on norms concerning the discharge of heavy metals into the sea and of waste into the atmosphere, enabling the International Nickel Corporation (Inco) to implement its plan to use sulphuric acid-based chemical processing. The country's resources would be substantially depleted and the environment polluted before self-determination was achieved between 2014 and 2019, and industrial pollution would substantially increase in the South Pacific region. He did not know whether neighbouring countries which would be affected had been officially informed of the danger, contrary to the international conventions in place.

83. He appealed to the United Nations to monitor the emancipation process that had been undertaken in New Caledonia. France must be called to account with regard to the performance of its role in the decolonization process. The United Nations was responsible for the future of the Kanak people and

should not allow them to sink into oblivion. Following an initiative by some members of the FLNKS leadership, he proposed that the United Nations should hold the next seminar on decolonization in Nouméa in 2006, and that a special United Nations mission should be sent to New Caledonia in accordance with the precedent set in 1999.

84. *Mr. Wamyton withdrew.*

Question of the United States Virgin Islands

85. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Dr. Corbin (United States Virgin Islands) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

86. **Dr. Corbin** (United States Virgin Islands) said that his Government had been engaged for the past 30 years in the question of the participation of Non-Self-Governing Territories in the work of the United Nations and its specialized agencies. Its participation in regional seminars on decolonization since 1990 had provided it with an important forum for interaction with representatives of other Territories as they proceeded towards democratic governance. His Government had sought to widen the participation of the Territory in the wider United Nations system of organizations, and in 1984 had become an associate member of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). It had also served as chairman of the United Nations Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee (CDCC) in 1988 to 1989 and was currently serving in that capacity. An important aspect of the work of a regional commission was to facilitate the participation of its associate members as observers in United Nations world conferences and selected special sessions of the General Assembly. Participation provided access to information on some major economic and social issues involved in the sustainable development of small island countries. He commended those specialized agencies and United Nations bodies, particularly the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and the respective regional commissions which had provided access for the Non-Self-Governing Territories.

87. He had been puzzled when some months earlier the Economic and Social Council had withheld support for the principle of the participation of the Territories in its activities, both because that constituted a reversal

and because the Council had shown great flexibility in granting consultative status to hundreds of non-governmental organizations over the years. The resolution currently before the Fourth Committee welcomed the ECLAC initiative to facilitate participation of the Territories in United Nations world conferences and sought to explore future modalities for their participation in the work of the Council. The States members of the Council would ultimately decide whether to implement those modalities, and the initiative should not cause them any concern. Provision for participation was, however, precious to the Territories as, in view of their non-self-governing status, it was inaccessible to them without the concurrence of the administering Power, and it would remain inaccessible until the completion of the decolonization process. Participation by the Territories would further build their capacity, enhance their development process, and contribute significantly to addressing their colonial condition. It was by such tangible support that the progress of the Non-Self-Governing Territories towards full self-government could be promoted.

88. *Dr. Corbin withdrew.*

89. *Mr. Gerts (Netherlands) took the Chair.*

Agenda item 26: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (Territories not covered under other agenda items) (*continued*) (A/60/23, A/60/71 and A/60/116)

Agenda item 34: Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories transmitted under Article 73 e of the Charter of the United Nations (*continued*) (A/60/23, chap. VII and XII, and A/60/69)

Agenda item 35: Economic and other activities which affect the interests of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories (*continued*) (A/60/23, chap. V and XII)

Agenda item 36: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples by the specialized agencies and the international institutions associated with the United Nations (*continued*) (A/60/23, chap. VI and VII, and A/60/64)

Agenda item 37: Offers by Member States of study and training facilities for inhabitants of Non-Self-Governing Territories (*continued*) (A/60/67)

90. **Mr. Patasani** (India) noted that, at the midpoint of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, there were still 16 Non-Self-Governing Territories on the list. In assisting the peoples of the Territories towards one of the three options for full self-government defined in the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (resolution 1514 (XV)), it was necessary to combine urgency and activism with sensitivity and circumspection. The needs and aspirations and special circumstances of the people in each Territory must be taken into account. Timing and format were vital considerations. He agreed with the Chairman of the Special Committee on Decolonization that tailored programmes of work must be devised for each Territory. A critical tool was the dissemination of information on decolonization to the people in the Territories. Unbiased information, especially on the options for self-determination, must be disseminated and all parties concerned must continuously review those options.

91. The United Nations visiting missions were a most important means of collecting first-hand information on conditions in the Territories and of ascertaining the wishes of the peoples concerning their future status. The regional seminars were equally significant. They served as an effective forum for focused discussion, and afforded opportunities for the representatives of the peoples of the Territories to present their views and recommendations to the United Nations. An earlier initiative to combine visiting missions with regional seminars should be pursued.

92. The role of the administering Power was a decisive factor. In recent years the administering Powers had acted in a spirit of cooperation and flexibility and he called upon them to assist the Special Committee to devise tailored action plans for the decolonization of certain Territories, focusing particularly on the work relating to the Territories under their administration. He hoped that the cooperation and partnership displayed, for example by the United Kingdom, would translate into formal participation by administering Powers in the work of the Special Committee. An interactive dialogue on the reality in the Territories would benefit all concerned.

93. He agreed with the Chairman of the Special Committee that the focus of the Committee should currently be on implementation. He supported moves to concentrate efforts on a plan of implementation for the wider United Nations system to convert calls for action into positive activities in order to achieve complete decolonization by 2010.

94. **Mr. Toro Jiménez** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) stressed his delegation's opposition to attempts that were being made, on the pretext of reform of the Organization, to question the role of the Fourth Committee, which had played such an important part in eradicating colonialism since the founding of the United Nations. He reaffirmed his delegation's full support for all peoples fighting against any form of colonialism.

95. He noted that the Saharan Arab Democratic Republic shared a Spanish cultural heritage with much of Latin American and the Caribbean. That affinity made the situation in Western Sahara a source of special concern for his delegation. The United Nations must ensure the implementation of all relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions and the holding of a referendum on self-determination, which would put an end to the illegal occupation of Western Sahara. He therefore welcomed the appointment of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General and called on all parties to cooperate with the Organization to resolve the conflict and allow the Saharan people to exercise their right to self-determination.

96. The principle of self-determination did not apply to the Falkland Islands (Malvinas), South Georgia Islands or South Sandwich Islands, Territories which belonged to Argentina; the population had been established there by the occupying Power.

97. His delegation supported the right of the people of Puerto Rico to self-determination and independence and called for the establishment of a mechanism to guarantee all Puerto Ricans the right to determine their political status and to put an end to the colonial relationship with the Federal Government of the occupying Power.

98. The decolonization process must be completed by the end of the Second Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. Little progress could be made, however, if there were attempts to redraft international law with a view to legalizing the rule of the imperial Powers, as had been attempted in the 2005 World Summit

Outcome document, in violation of the fundamental principles of international law enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and of due process. Member States should work to reform the Organization in a way that would strengthen the principles which had inspired its creation rather than seek in an underhanded manner to reassert the right of intervention of the former colonial and neo-colonial Powers.

99. **Mr. Dube** (Botswana), speaking on behalf of the Southern African Development Community, stressed the great importance of decolonization and the principle of self-determination for peoples under foreign occupation. That had been the basis for the struggle for independence in the southern African subregion. In that context, he noted the commendable work of the Fourth Committee in addressing the plight of those still under colonial and foreign occupation and domination.

100. For more than four decades the issue of decolonization had been on the agenda of the Special Committee and Member States had been called upon to redouble their efforts to end colonialism during the Second International Decade. Little real progress had, however, been made since the independence of East Timor. All Member States therefore had a responsibility to assist the Non-Self-Governing Territories in their quest for independence.

101. The Southern African Development Community welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism (A/60/71) and agreed that Member States, the administering Powers, the United Nations specialized agencies and programmes and the Special Committee must work together to implement the plan of action for the Second International Decade. In that context, he expressed support for the recommendations made at the Caribbean regional seminar on the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, held in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines in May 2005, which had underscored the international community's commitment to the implementation of the plan of action.

102. With regard to Western Sahara, he said it was regrettable that the settlement plan and the Baker plan remained unimplemented; the Kingdom of Morocco must accept the Baker plan as the only viable option and agree to the holding of a free and fair referendum. He welcomed the recent appointment of a new Special

Envoy and a new Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and was encouraged that the appointees were acceptable to both parties. The commendable initiatives noted in the report of the Secretary-General on the Question of Western Sahara (A/60/116), such as the exchange of family visits programme and the confidence-building measures, were demonstrations of political goodwill that could help to lead the way to a political solution.

103. He stressed that as long as peoples still lived under colonial occupation and domination, there could be no peace, development or real respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. The eradication of colonialism must remain a priority for the United Nations and the international community; the Organization and the Special Committee, in particular, must ensure that the 16 remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories achieved independence by the end of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism.

104. **Mr. Kapoma** (Zambia) said that his delegation was grateful to the Secretary-General for his report on the question of Western Sahara (A/60/116). Zambia strongly supported the process of decolonization in Western Sahara and to that end reaffirmed the inalienable right of all peoples, including those of Western Sahara to self-determination and independence, in accordance with the principles set forth in the Charter of the United Nations and in the landmark General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV). Decolonization remained one of the unfinished assignments on the agenda of the United Nations. He called upon the international community to take all necessary steps to bring about the complete and speedy eradication of colonialism in all its forms in the remaining 16 Non-Self-Governing Territories.

105. He reaffirmed his Government's strong support for the efforts of the Secretary-General as expressed in the Baker plan, which had enjoyed the support of the Security Council in resolution 1541 (2004) and which constituted a mutually acceptable political solution to the conflict over Western Sahara. His Government urged the parties to the conflict to work with the United Nations with respect to the peace plan for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara. The United Nations and the rest of the international community must not fail the Saharan people in their hour of need.

106. **Mr. Ileka** (Democratic Republic of the Congo), speaking on a point of order, said that his delegation associated itself with most of the statement made by the representative of Botswana on behalf of the Southern African Development Community. With regard to Western Sahara, his delegation's position remained unchanged: the United Nations must prevail on the parties involved to accept a fair and lasting settlement in accordance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. He therefore called on all parties and States of the region to cooperate fully with the United Nations in ensuring progress towards a politically acceptable solution.

107. **Mr. Okio** (Congo) expressed regret that much remained to be done in order to put an end to colonialism and recalled that all States had a duty to assist in the decolonization process. The presentations by the numerous petitioners had made the urgency of such efforts apparent. No real progress towards economic and social development and independence for the Non-Self-Governing Territories would be possible without the full cooperation of the administering Powers and he called for a true partnership between the latter and the Special Committee. In that context, he cited New Zealand and the United Kingdom as examples of such a partnership, which should be imitated by the other administering Powers.

108. The Special Mission to Bermuda in March and May 2005 had provided an opportunity for dialogue with the population of that Territory and highlighted the need to increase awareness of the decolonization process in the Non-Self-Governing Territories and to improve the coordination of the decolonization efforts of the United Nations system. Such missions played an important role in evaluating the situation in the Non-Self-Governing Territories and strengthening assistance to their peoples and they could contribute to the development of effective policies. The successful Caribbean regional seminar held in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines in May 2005 had confirmed the importance of frequent missions to the Non-Self-Governing Territories.

109. He welcomed efforts by the Department of Public Information to increase awareness about the decolonization process in the Non-Self-Governing Territories; those efforts should be strengthened and supported by the United Nations system as a whole. He commended the United Nations Development

Programme (UNDP) for its activities in the Non-Self-Governing Territories and also commended States which offered fellowships to students from the Non-Self-Governing Territories.

110. The situation in Western Sahara was a source of grave concern; the parties to the conflict and the States in the subregion must work in a spirit of compromise to achieve a political solution that would take into account the principle of the right of peoples to self-determination, the interests of the populations concerned and the need for peace and cooperation in the subregion. He therefore welcomed signs of progress such as the release of prisoners, encouraged the Secretary-General to continue his efforts to promote dialogue between the parties to the conflict and welcomed the appointment of a new Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General.

111. **Mr. Ali** (Malaysia) said that more than 80 former colonies had gained their independence since the adoption of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, in 1960; the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories were, however, a constant reminder that the decolonization process had not yet been concluded. He therefore welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism (A/60/71) and stressed that it was the duty of the international community, the administering Powers and the United Nations system, in particular the Special Committee, to bring the process of decolonization to a successful conclusion.

112. He highlighted the importance of the Caribbean regional seminar, held in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines in May 2005, which had provided a valuable opportunity to take stock of the progress that had been made, hear the views and recommendations of the representatives of the Non-Self-Governing Territories and form strategies for the eradication of colonialism before the end of the Decade. The recommendations adopted at the seminar merited consideration and follow-up as tools to serve the needs of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories. Many of those Territories had made considerable progress in their development and had gone a long way towards self-government; they simply had to find an appropriate format and calendar for the completion of decolonization.

113. He supported the idea of a public awareness campaign to increase understanding in the Non-Self-Governing Territories of the self-determination options available to them, especially with a view to developing programmes of work for specific Territories. The United Nations Information Centres, especially those in the Pacific and Caribbean regions, could play a significant role in promoting public awareness and mobilizing support for consultations on self-determination.

114. The administering Powers should cooperate with the Special Committee in a spirit of understanding, realism and flexibility. He called on the Special Committee to continue to encourage the resumption of negotiations between the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom with a view to resolving the question of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas), taking into consideration the interests of the peoples of the Islands. With regard to Western Sahara, the parties should agree on a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution which would provide for the self-determination of the population in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

115. Noting that his delegation was currently Chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement, he underscored the role the Movement had played in the decolonization progress. At their Thirteenth Summit Conference in Kuala Lumpur in February 2003, the Heads of State or Government of the Non-Aligned Movement had reaffirmed the inalienable right of the Non-Self-Governing Territories to self-determination, regardless of their size, location, population or limited natural resources. The Non-Aligned Movement had also reaffirmed the rights of all people who had been or continued to be subject to colonial rule or occupation to receive from the colonizing countries full compensation for the economic, social and cultural consequences of that occupation.

116. His Government supported the principle of self-determination, which should be implemented in accordance with the wishes of the people, United Nations General Assembly resolutions and the Charter of the United Nations. It supported the work of the Special Committee, which should be provided with adequate financial and human resources to carry out the noble task of decolonization, and it would maintain its solidarity with the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories.

117. **Mr. Williams** (United Kingdom), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that his delegation reserved its right to reply at a later date to comments made by a number of delegations with regard to the sovereignty of the Falkland Islands.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.

**General Assembly**

Sixtieth session

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**Special Political and Decolonization Committee
(Fourth Committee)****Summary record of the 6th meeting**

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 11 October 2005, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Aliyev (Azerbaijan)**Contents**Agenda item 26: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of
Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (*continued*)*Agenda item 34: Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories transmitted
under Article 73 e of the Charter of the United Nations (*continued*)*Agenda item 35: Economic and other activities which affect the interests of the
peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories (*continued*)*Agenda item 36: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of
Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples by the specialized agencies and the
international institutions associated with the United Nations (*continued*)*Agenda item 37: Offers by Member States of study and training facilities for
inhabitants of Non-Self-Governing Territories (*continued*)*

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- * Items which the Committee has decided to consider together

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Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.



The meeting was called to order at 10.16 a.m.

Expression of sympathy in connection with the recent earthquakes in Pakistan and Afghanistan

1. **The Chairman**, on behalf of all the members of the Committee, expressed sympathy to the Governments of Pakistan and Afghanistan in connection with the recent earthquakes in their countries.

2. **Mr. Ahmad** (Pakistan) expressed his country's deep appreciation for the kind words of sympathy and compassion following Pakistan's great loss caused by the recent earthquakes. The expressions of sympathy, and the offers of support from the United Nations system and the international community at large, had strengthened the resolve and fortitude of the people of Pakistan to brave the great tragedy.

Expression of sympathy in connection with the recent flooding and mudslides in Guatemala

3. **The Chairman**, on behalf of all the members of the Committee, expressed sympathy to the Government of Guatemala in connection with the recent flooding and mudslides in its country.

4. **Mr. Puja** (Indonesia) recalled that in April 2005, in Bandung, Indonesia, the nations of Asia and Africa had commemorated the golden jubilee of the 1955 Asian-African Conference. That historic conference had given voice to the voiceless and provided a strong boost towards ending colonialism on the two continents. The jubilee commemoration, while laying the foundation for a strategic partnership of peoples who had sent a strong message that colonialism had to be a thing of the past.

5. Indonesia strongly believed that the United Nations had a key role to play in decolonizing the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories. His delegation shared the view that each situation had special characteristics and there was no universal prescription for decolonization. However, it had to be conceded that the decolonization of the last few Non-Self-Governing Territories was proceeding very slowly, with the exception of Tokelau, where New Zealand, as the administering Power, and Tokelau had developed an exemplary working relationship.

6. Indonesia was encouraged by the innovative approach taken by the Special Committee on

Decolonization to progress towards achievable goals, with the overall aim of assisting the people of the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories in realizing their aspiration of political equality and a full measure of self-government. The Special Committee's visit to Bermuda in February 2005 and the Caribbean Regional Seminar in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines in May 2005 had resulted in a productive exchange of views on the challenges being faced by the people of the Non-Self-Governing Territories and the role that the United Nations might play in the development process. His delegation advocated further cooperation between the Special Committee and the specialized agencies to assist the peoples in preparing for self-determination. Indonesia called upon the administering Powers to show greater commitment to the speedy and unconditional end of colonialism in the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories, thereby ensuring successful closure to the Special Committee's mandate.

7. **Mr. Shiweva** (Namibia), said that Namibia, as one of the countries that had suffered under colonialism, foreign occupation and domination, strongly commended the Committee for its ongoing important work. While the 2005 World Summit had addressed various aspects of the world economic, security and social situations, it had failed to address the important issue of decolonization. Namibia took the view that where colonialism and foreign occupation existed, there could be no development, no security, and no freedom to live in dignity. The peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories therefore deserved special attention and looked to the United Nations for assistance and support.

8. The people of Western Sahara placed high hopes in the Organization, despite more than three decades of continual denial of their inalienable right to self-determination. The General Assembly and the African Union had recognized the inalienable rights of the Saharan people to self-determination and nationhood. The ceasefire proclaimed in September 1991 was still in place, allowing for the implementation of the settlement plan and paving the way for the holding of a free and fair referendum under the auspices of the United Nations. Namibia commended the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) for its role in monitoring and enforcing the ceasefire agreement and called on the international community to spare no efforts in assisting the parties to advance the peace process. His delegation was

permitted that delaying tactics were being used and that attempts were being made to legitimize the illegal occupation. Namibia called upon the Government of Morocco to accept and implement the peace plan so as to enable the people of Western Sahara to determine their own future.

9. Namibia also reiterated its support for and solidarity with the Palestinian people in their struggle for self-determination and for the establishment of a sovereign Palestinian State. Finally, his delegation urged that the plan of action for the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism should be implemented without delay.

10. **Mr. Gebreel** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that his country had been the first to declare its independence through the United Nations following its own bitter experience of colonialism and that it was consequently well aware of the potential role of the Organization in that regard. While regretting the lack of progress achieved in implementing the plan of action for the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, he hoped that the cooperation of New Zealand concerning the Territory of Tokelau would serve as an incentive for other administering Powers to follow suit and provide the financial and technical assistance needed to prepare the peoples in question for autonomy, to which end appropriate legislation and measures to sever colonial ties should be put in place. He further urged the States concerned to stop using the Territories under their administration for military purposes; they should instead safeguard the natural resources in those Territories and compensate their peoples for the consequences of any misuse of their resources and land. Greater effort should also be devoted to enabling peoples under foreign rule to exercise self-determination, in which connection he stressed that the Territory's size, number of inhabitants and volume of resources had no bearing. As for the Palestinian people, the international community was still proving incapable of ending their tragedy, which had now lasted over 50 years, through enforcement of the United Nations resolutions that would enable them to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination and return to their land to establish an independent State. His country supported all efforts to eradicate the last surviving pockets of colonialism and implement the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. With those two

objectives in mind, he appealed for the cooperation of all States with the Committee.

11. **Mr. Loedel** (Uruguay), speaking on behalf of the member States of the Southern Common market (MERCOSUR) — Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay — and the associated States Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela, said that the question of the Malvinas Islands, had been described by both the General Assembly and by the Special Committee on Decolonization as a special and particular colonial question, because the United Kingdom had occupied the islands by force in 1833, expelling their inhabitants and the Argentine authorities established there and replacing them with settlers of British descent. Moreover, in General Assembly resolution 2065 (XX), approved by a large majority, and in many other resolutions, the matter was defined as a dispute between the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom concerning sovereignty over the islands, which had to be resolved by way of negotiations between the two States, bearing in mind the provisions and objectives of the Charter of the United Nations and of General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV). Furthermore, General Assembly resolution 2065 (XX) explicitly stated that the two parties had to bear in mind the interests of the population of the Malvinas Islands, which excluded the application of the principle of self-determination.

12. The MERCOSUR member States and associated States fully supported the principle of self-determination, but considered that it was applicable to subjugated peoples, as specified in General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV), but not to the descendants of a non-indigenous population. For that reason, they were in agreement with the draft resolution on the question of the Malvinas adopted by the Special Committee on 15 June 2005, which was fully in line with the rejection by the General Assembly in 1985 of proposals to include the principle of self-determination in the draft resolution on the question of the Malvinas. Meanwhile the principle that was applicable to the issue was the principle of territorial integrity, as laid down in General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV). Lastly, the MERCOSUR countries wished to recall the Declaration on the Malvinas Islands approved at the tenth meeting of the Presidents of MERCOSUR, Bolivia and Chile on 25 June 1996, reaffirming their support for the legitimate rights of the Argentine Republic in the sovereignty dispute and expressing the

hope that the dispute would be resolved promptly, in accordance with the resolutions of the United Nations and of the Organization of American States.

13. **Mr. Koonjul** (Mauritius) recalled that at the 2005 World Summit, world leaders had rededicated themselves to upholding the right to self-determination of people remaining under colonial domination and foreign occupation. The contribution of the United Nations to the decolonization process, especially in Africa, should encourage efforts to ensure that the people of the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories were able to exercise their right to self-determination in accordance with the Declaration on Decolonization. Mauritius welcomed the cooperation between New Zealand and Tokelau in the preparations for the exercise of the right of self-determination by the people of Tokelau. It encouraged the parties involved in the issues of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas) and Gibraltar to undertake negotiations in good faith to find peaceful and definitive solutions to those issues. It also noted with appreciation the continued progress made, thus far, for the Kanak people in New Caledonia under the Matignon and the Noumea Accords.

14. The struggle for self-determination by the people of Western Sahara had caused tragic loss of life, separation of families and untold misery. It was regrettable that there was still no agreement between the parties on the peace plan. Mauritius urged all the parties to continue to exercise restraint and to refrain from taking any action that could worsen the chances for a peaceful solution. It also stressed the need for full respect for the military agreements reached with MINURSO concerning the ceasefire. Mauritius commended the important role played by MINURSO under difficult circumstances, and supported the Secretary-General's recommendation that the Mission should be maintained. It also welcomed the success of the first phase of the family visits programme. Mauritius considered the release of 400 Moroccan prisoners by the Frente POLISARIO to be an encouraging step, and appealed to the Moroccan authorities to release all Saharan prisoners of war still in detention. It encouraged the Secretary-General and the Security Council to remain resolute in assisting the parties to reach a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution.

15. **Mr. Martins** (Angola), recalling that his country's long decolonization process had ultimately

succeeded thanks to the efforts of many delegations present in the Committee, said that it was a moral obligation for Angola to contribute to the work of the Committee. Decolonization remained an issue of central importance to which the international community should continue to pay special attention, as had been reiterated at the 2005 World Summit.

16. With regard to the question of Western Sahara, the report of the Secretary-General revealed that no progress had been made in the political sphere since the adoption by the Security Council of resolutions 1495 (2003) and 1541 (2004). The peace plan for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara had been accepted by the Frente POLISARIO, but, its non-acceptance by one of the parties had resulted in deadlock, a situation that could be changed only by political will and commitment of the parties and the international community. Angola therefore called upon the parties to cooperate with the United Nations, in particular the Security Council, the Secretary-General, and his Personal Envoy.

17. The presence of MINURSO continued to be a clear demonstration of the commitment of the United Nations and the international community, a stabilizing factor and a guarantee for the respect of the ceasefire, as well as a vital tool for confidence-building. For that reason, Angola fully shared the view of the Secretary-General that reducing the size of MINURSO would not be advisable. However, its presence would be productive only if sincere and positive changes occurred in the political process. His delegation commended the release of former Moroccan prisoners by the Frente POLISARIO, and believed that the demand of the Frente POLISARIO for the release of Saharan political prisoners was an issue meriting particular attention. Angola appealed to the international community to continue providing humanitarian assistance to the Saharan people.

18. During the Committee meeting on 7 October 2005, one of the petitioners, the representative of "Freedom for All", had made reference to alleged deportation of Saharan children to Angola, Cuba, Mozambique and the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya by the Frente POLISARIO. That information could only have been fabricated, and constituted a lack of respect to the Committee and an insult to the Government and people of Angola.

19. **Mr. Sow** (Guinea) said that the Special Committee had made significant progress, but there was still much to be done. His delegation supported the idea that the Special Committee and the administering Powers should seize the opportunity offered to them by shifts in the situation of certain Territories to draw up decolonization plans on a case-by-case basis, with participation by representatives of the Non-Self-Governing Territories.

20. His delegation attached particular importance to the question of Western Sahara. While appreciating the progress made, in the negotiations between the parties, notable in the area of the release of the last Moroccan prisoners and the first phase of the programme of family visits, it was concerned that the consensus which had always characterized the adoption of resolutions on the matter since 1989 had been broken at the preceding session. His delegation strongly hoped that consensus could be restored, so that the international community could focus all its energy on overcoming the fundamental differences which had become evident in the negotiations and finding a peaceful solution, in line with the interests of the parties concerned and of the African region as a whole. It called on the international community, United Nations bodies, the parties to the conflict and the other countries of the subregion, to make greater efforts with the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General to find a political, negotiated and mutually acceptable solution to resolve the dispute once and for all.

21. **Mr. Ndiaye** (Gabon) reaffirmed his delegation's strong attachment to the principle of multilateralism and its belief in the central role of the United Nations. He praised the Organization's successful decolonization efforts but appealed for more effective implementation of the relevant resolutions. It would be unfortunate to have to declare a third international decade for the eradication of colonialism after 2011.

22. Midway through the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism there was still a great need to provide information and training to the Non-Self-Governing Territories in order to enhance their economic and social progress. Gabon supported the establishment of mechanisms to assess the implementation of the recommendations of the General Assembly and the plan of action for the Second Decade.

23. Gabon maintained relations of friendship and cooperation with all the Arab countries in the Maghreb, in particular Morocco and believed that the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the latter must be maintained. It welcomed the Secretary-General's tireless efforts to seek a political solution to the question of Western Sahara and his recent appointment of Mr. van Walsum as his new Personal Envoy. His delegation hoped that Mr. van Walsum's forthcoming visit to the region would inspire the parties to renew dialogue with a view to achieving a lasting and mutually acceptable solution in accordance with Security Council resolution 1598 (2005). As illustrated by the measure of progress achieved in recent months, full and sincere cooperation among all parties to the conflict and the support of the international community were more necessary than ever in order to overcome the current impasse. His delegation hoped that the individual differences between the parties could be transformed into elements of rapprochement, for the sake of peace and development of the entire Maghreb region and for the benefit of the African Union.

24. **Mr. Wali** (Nigeria) said that support for the implementation of the plan of action for the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism should be translated into action in order for the 16 remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories to attain their independence by 2010.

25. Nigeria, a strong supporter of the principle of self-determination, opposed any policy that either perpetuated subjugation or sought to thwart the enjoyment of sovereign independence. It was therefore concerned at the slow pace of progress in the Western Sahara. Any reduction in the size of MINURSO, particularly its military component, would have a negative impact on the implementation of its mandate and would send the wrong message about the resolve of the international community to support self-determination. His delegation therefore welcomed the Secretary-General's recommendation on the future of MINURSO, contained in his report (A/60/116), and the Security Council's decision, in its resolution 1598 (2005), to extend the Mission's mandate through October. That, however, should not serve as an excuse for postponing action in a situation that demanded an urgent solution. Commending the Government of Algeria for granting asylum to Saharan families and individuals displaced by the conflict, he stressed the need to launch the referendum process as expeditiously

as possible. The African Union had offered its services to facilitate a settlement of the question of Western Sahara, which would enhance peace, security and development in the entire subregion.

26. **Mr. Guterres** (Timor-Leste) expressed his delegation's support for the recommendations contained in the report of the Special Committee on Decolonization (A/60/23). As a member of the Special Committee, Timor-Leste had had an opportunity to participate in the visiting mission to Bermuda and to learn about the hopes and concerns of the Bermudan people.

27. His delegation welcomed the progress achieved in a number of Territories administered by the United Kingdom, as well as in Tokelau and in New Caledonia. It appealed for the continuation of bilateral or multilateral negotiations on Gibraltar and the Falklands (Malvinas).

28. His delegation welcomed the Secretary-General's efforts to implement Security Council resolutions on Western Sahara, and the continuing commitment of the Government of Morocco and Frente POLISARIO leaders to maintain the ceasefire. It praised the Frente POLISARIO for the release of the remaining Moroccan prisoners of war and appealed to the Government of Morocco to reciprocate. It concurred with the Secretary-General that MINURSO should not be downsized and believed that the Baker Plan remained the best possible option for achieving a political solution in the region. Timor-Leste urged the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy, Mr. van Walsum, to continue their efforts to find a lasting settlement.

29. Commending the work of the 2005 Caribbean regional seminar, held in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, he said that Timor-Leste would like to host the 2006 Pacific regional seminar, in gratitude for the Special Committee's efforts for the people of Timor-Leste over more than two decades.

30. **Mr. Al-Zayani** (Bahrain) reviewed the resolutions and declarations that had been adopted over the years with a view to ending colonialism and lamented the failure to implement the plan of action of the First International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. In view of its importance to the people still under colonial rule, his delegation hoped that the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism would be the final such Decade.

31. **Mr. Kafando** (Burkina Faso) said that, on the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations, decolonization was more relevant than ever. Its achievements and the increase in its membership demonstrated that the Special Committee on Decolonization remained the most effective framework for implementing the Declaration. He hoped that the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism would be the last, but dialogue and cooperation between administering Powers and Non-Self-Governing Territories would be necessary to achieve that end.

32. His delegation welcomed the January and April reports of the Secretary-General on the question of Western Sahara and the adoption of Security Council resolution 1598 (2005). Harling the release of Moroccan political prisoners, he noted that, ultimately, the fate of Western Sahara depended on the willingness of all parties concerned to cooperate fully with United Nations initiatives to attain a just and lasting political solution.

33. **Mr. Laki** (Uganda) said that the world could not claim to be civilized as long as some peoples were denied their right to self-determination. His delegation supported reform of the United Nations, including elimination of the Special Committee on Decolonization upon the completion of its mandate. He called for the accelerated settlement of the question of Western Sahara, and applauded the release of Moroccan prisoners of war by Frente POLISARIO. It was now up to Morocco to reciprocate.

34. **Mr. Badji** (Senegal) said that the question of Western Sahara was of special importance to Senegal, as it had common borders with Morocco and Algeria, two brotherly countries with whom it had maintained relations for centuries. Welcoming the Secretary-General's determination to help those two countries reach a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution, he urged all parties to pursue negotiations to that end and to create a climate of confidence that would dissipate misunderstandings and tension. It was vital to maintain the status quo by preserving the ceasefire in accordance with paragraphs 4 and 15 of the report of the Secretary-General — particularly as the successful monitoring of the ceasefire by MINURSO was a stabilizing and confidence-building factor — and to address humanitarian issues with the invaluable help of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

35. His delegation welcomed the release of the Moroccan prisoners of war by Frente POLISARIO. It cautioned, however, that humanitarian questions should not serve as a pretext to minimize the importance of any future settlement plan. The fate of remaining prisoners and those reported as missing must continue to be a matter of concern for the United Nations. Senegal welcomed the appointment of the new Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General.

36. While reaffirming the need to maintain the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Morocco, he expressed his delegation's support for all initiatives aimed at attaining a just and lasting solution to the question of Western Sahara, for the benefit of all the peoples and countries of the subregion. That position was based on Senegal's views in favour of the full implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions and the search for a political solution to the conflict through dialogue and negotiations under the auspices of the United Nations, its long-standing political and economic ties with Morocco and its desire to maintain friendly relations with all the countries of the Arab Maghreb. Settlement of the question of Western Sahara was crucial not only because it would enable Morocco to rejoin the African Union, but also because it would help to stabilize the Maghreb, which increasingly had to deal with the threat of cross-border terrorism.

37. The attainment of a just political solution depended in large part on the political will of all those involved. His delegation urged the Secretary-General to persevere in the implementation of confidence-building measures between the Parties. In conclusion, he expressed the fervent hope that the draft resolution on the question of Western Sahara would be adopted by consensus, in keeping with tradition. That would send a strong positive signal on the eve of the Personal Envoy's trip to the subregion.

38. **Mr. Maema** (Lesotho) said that halfway through the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, progress was very slow. The Members of the United Nations had to ponder whether there was enough political will to complete the decolonization agenda.

39. The denial of the right to self-determination of the Saharan people must be urgently addressed, and the sentiment expressed by fellow Africans, that the liberation of the continent would be complete only

when Western Sahara gained its independence, must be heeded. He noted with appreciation that the Secretary-General had reiterated his commitment to the achievement of a mutually acceptable political solution to the question of Western Sahara. The United Nations must redouble its efforts to break the current deadlock.

40. **Mr. Bennouna** (Morocco) said that instead of having to discuss the question of Sahara once again in the Committee, his delegation would have preferred to engage in negotiations to advance towards a mutually acceptable political solution, in accordance with Security Council resolution 1598 (2005). His Government had stated many times that it was prepared to enter into such negotiations. The continuation of the dispute had unfortunately hampered cooperation among the countries of the Maghreb and their integration within the Maghreb Arab Union.

41. Negotiations should begin as soon as possible, and should focus on a compromise solution and a common denominator, namely, the elaboration of a statute of autonomy that would enable the entire population to manage its own affairs, in full respect for the Kingdom of Morocco's prerogatives of sovereignty. Nothing could justify the refusal to sit around the negotiating table and seek a mutually acceptable political solution; such refusal could only derive from the desire to perpetuate an antagonistic situation, from which certain parties appeared to be deriving undisclosed benefits. Moreover, under international law and the Charter of the United Nations, all parties to a dispute were required to strive for a peaceful settlement through direct negotiations. Morocco was prepared to undertake that process at any time, under the auspices of the United Nations, and hoped that Algeria would do the same, in order to fulfil their shared responsibilities to the peoples of the Maghreb.

42. In order to regain consensus within the Committee, Morocco had proposed to update the 2003 resolution, stressing the divergent reactions of the parties to the second plan proposed by the former Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General. Obviously, the international community could not have given any support to that plan if it had not been agreed to by the parties, and the disagreement between the parties had been duly noted in official documents of the United Nations. Political practice within the United Nations, not to mention intellectual honesty, had finally led to Morocco's legitimate demands being taken into account. It had now been clearly established that the

second plan had become obsolete leaving the new Personal Envoy free to ascertain the positions of the parties with regard to a compromise political solution.

43. Morocco, which had been partially decolonized in 1956, after being divided among several European Powers at the beginning of the 20th century, had since then constantly endeavoured to achieve national unity, in order to enable the entire Moroccan people to exercise their right of self-determination throughout the national territory. Thus, through successive negotiations with Spain, it had been able to regain the territories of Tarfaya, Sidi Ifni and Sahara, which had been under Spanish colonization. Since then, Morocco had spared no effort to settle the dispute with Algeria over the Sahara. His Government had accepted the first plan proposed by the former Personal Envoy, but that plan had been categorically rejected by Algeria. On principle, however, Morocco had not been able to accept the partition of the territory, as proposed to Mr. Baker by Algeria on 2 November 2001. His Government had also objected to the second plan proposed by Mr. Baker in 2002, because it departed from the concept of a political solution founded on autonomy, a concept which had been defined by the Personal Envoy himself and had been at the origin of Morocco's commitment to the entire process. Obviously a solution that was not mutually acceptable had no chance of success. Morocco could therefore not understand the obstinacy of Algeria in supporting a plan that lacked validity because it had not been agreed to by the parties.

44. Morocco wished to thank all the parties that had assisted in the settlement of the humanitarian aspects of the Sahara dispute. It welcomed the recent release of Moroccan prisoners held at Tindouf, in Algerian territory, but would continue to demand that justice should be done, the perpetrators of war crimes should be prosecuted, victims should be compensated and the fate of hundreds of Moroccans who had disappeared should be clarified. It would also continue to call for a census of Moroccan civilians held hostage at Tindouf to be conducted by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). He stressed his Government's desire for the dispute imposed on it to come to an end, in order to pave the way for a new era of cooperation and construction in the Maghreb that would strengthen and enhance unity in the subregion and throughout the African continent.

45. The Chairman invited the Committee to take action on the draft resolutions and draft decision relating to agenda items 76, 34, 35, 36 and 37.

Draft resolution I: Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories transmitted under Article 73 e of the Charter of the United Nations (A/60/23, chap. XII, sect. A)

46. The Chairman said that the Secretariat had informed him that draft resolution I had no financial implications.

47. A recorded vote was taken.

In favour

Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belgium, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, China, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Dominica, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, Gabon, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Honduras, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Liberia, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mexico, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia and Montenegro, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Against:

None.

Abstaining:

France, Israel, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America.

48. *Draft resolution I was adopted by 130 votes to none, with 4 abstentions.*

49. **Mr. Williams** (United Kingdom) said that, as in previous years, his country had abstained in the vote on the draft resolution. It did not take issue with the main objective of the resolution, which was to seek compliance with Article 73 *e* of the Charter of the United Nations, and would continue to meet its obligations fully in that regard with respect to the United Kingdom Overseas Territories. However, his Government believed that the decision as to whether a Non-Self-Governing Territory had reached a level of self-government sufficient to release the administering Power from the obligation to transmit information under Article 73 *e* of the Charter fell to the Government of the Territory and the administering Power concerned, and not to the General Assembly.

Draft resolution II: Economic and other activities that affect the interests of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories (A/60/23, chap. XII, sect. B).

50. **The Chairman** said that the Secretariat had informed him that draft resolution II had no financial implications.

51. *A recorded vote was taken.*

In favour:

Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belgium, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Dominica, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, Gabon, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Honduras, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho,

Liberia, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia and Montenegro, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Against:

Israel, United States of America.

Abstaining:

France, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

52. *Draft resolution II was adopted by 137 votes to 2, with 2 abstentions.*

53. **Mr. Desmoures** (Argentina) said that his delegation believed that draft resolution II must be interpreted and implemented in conformity with the relevant General Assembly resolutions on decolonization, particularly resolutions 2065 (XVI) and 31/49 and subsequent resolutions on the question of the Malvinas.

Draft resolution III: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples by the specialized agencies and the international institutions associated with the United Nations (A/60/23, chap. XII, sect. C).

54. **The Chairman** said that the Secretariat had informed him that draft resolution III had no financial implications.

55. **Ms. Joseph** (Saint Lucia) said that in paragraph 13 of draft resolution III, the word "reiterated" should be replaced by "noted".

56. *A recorded vote was taken.*

In favour:

Algeria, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Australia, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Chile, China, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Dominica, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, Gabon, Ghana, Guatemala, Guinea, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Jamaica, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Mauritius, Mexico, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Qatar, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Against:

None.

Abstaining:

Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, San Marino, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America.

57. *Draft resolution III, as orally amended, was adopted by 93 votes to none, with 49 abstentions.*

58. **Mr. Desmoures** (Argentina) said that his delegation had voted in favour of draft resolution III. However, paragraphs 12, 13 and 14 must be

interpreted, as in the past, within the context of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). The participation of associate members of regional commissions in various United Nations meetings must be guided by the rules of procedure of the General Assembly and its resolutions on decolonization, particularly those related to specific Territories; only current associate members of regional commissions, ECLAC in particular, could participate in such activities. Territories that were subject to a sovereignty dispute, recognized by the United Nations in its resolutions, should under no circumstances be allowed such participation.

59. **Mr. Thomson** (United Kingdom), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that the Member States of the European Union reaffirmed their support for the specialized agencies in their efforts to offer assistance to Non-Self-Governing Territories in the humanitarian, technical and educational fields. However, the statutes of those agencies must be carefully respected, and for that reason, the European Union had again abstained in the vote on the draft resolution.

Draft resolution A/C.4/60/L.2: Offers by Member States of study and training facilities for inhabitants of Non-Self-Governing Territories

60. **The Chairman** said that the Secretariat had informed him that draft resolution A/C.4/60/L.2 had no financial implications. The Syrian Arab Republic had become a sponsor of the draft resolution.

61. *Draft resolution A/C.4/60/L.2 was adopted.*

62. **The Chairman** said that the Secretariat had informed him that the draft resolutions under agenda item 26 had neither regular budget nor programme budget implications.

Draft resolution A/C.4/60/L.4: Question of Western Sahara

63. *Draft resolution A/C.4/60/L.4 was adopted.*

64. **Mr. Williams** (United Kingdom), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the acceding countries Bulgaria and Romania; the candidate countries Turkey and Croatia; the countries of the stabilization and association process Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; and, in addition, Iceland,

Liechtenstein and Norway, as well as Ukraine and Moldova, said that the European Union welcomed the fact that the draft resolution on the question of Western Sahara had been presented as a proposal of the Chairman, and had been adopted by consensus. It supported efforts to find a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution which would allow for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara, as envisaged by the Security Council. The European Union continued to encourage the parties to work towards such a solution, within the framework of the United Nations, and to work with the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy, Mr. Peter Van Walsum and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Chief of MINURSO, Mr. Francesco Bastagli. The European Union paid tribute to MINURSO and its role in the peace process.

65. The European Union remained concerned about the humanitarian aspects of the conflict, welcomed the release of 404 Moroccan prisoners of war by the Frente POLISARIO in August, and urged all parties to take concrete measures within their area of responsibility to resolve the remaining humanitarian issues linked to the conflict. Both parties should continue to cooperate with the efforts of ICRC concerning all the people unaccounted for since the beginning of the conflict, and collaborate with UNHCR in implementing confidence-building measures. The European Union was convinced that progress on those issues could help to improve the atmosphere for the political process.

66. **Mr. Baali** (Algeria) welcomed the adoption by consensus of draft resolution A/C.4/60/L.4. His delegation was pleased that the international community had solemnly reiterated that the conflict in Western Sahara was a question of decolonization which fell under General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) and must be resolved through the exercise by the people of Western Sahara of their inalienable right of self-determination. It also welcomed the continued unanimous support of the international community for the settlement plan and for the peace plan for self-determination of the people of Western Sahara. In underlining that the parties had reacted differently to the peace plan, the international community was recognizing that the Frente POLISARIO had officially accepted the plan, whereas Morocco had formally rejected it, thereby assuming full responsibility for the impasse in the peace process. His delegation was pleased that the General Assembly had reaffirmed the

responsibility of the United Nations towards the people of Western Sahara, and, in calling upon the parties to release without further delay all persons held since the start of the conflict, was calling upon Morocco to release the hundreds of prisoners of war and political detainees who were still in Moroccan prisons and whose families had had no news for years.

67. Since the Frente POLISARIO had released all the prisoners of war previously held, the international community expected Morocco to fulfil its obligations under international humanitarian law, put an end to the ill-treatment of political detainees, particularly those arrested during the recent nationalist demonstrations, and accept and implement the peace plan, which remained the optimal political solution for a just and final settlement of the conflict. The forthcoming visit to the region of the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy would give Morocco an opportunity to return to international legality by accepting a referendum on self-determination, which was the fairest and most democratic means of settling an issue of decolonization.

68. **Mr. Bennouna** (Morocco) said that on 9 April 2004, Morocco had informed the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General of its objections to all aspects of the peace plan which departed from the concept introduced by the Personal Envoy in 2000 and based on autonomy, with respect for the sovereign rights of Morocco. The other parties had pretended to accept the plan, while expressing reservations on certain substantive aspects. It was in view of that situation that his delegation had reached agreement with the representative of Algeria to include in draft resolution A/C.4/60/L.4 the clear and unambiguous text of paragraph 3. That paragraph made it clear that the parties were in disagreement about the plan, and in the absence of such agreement, the plan continued to be a text drawn up by the former Personal Envoy by which no party was bound. When the newly appointed Personal Envoy arrived in the region, Algeria should not close the door to peace by insisting on the implementation of a defunct plan.

Draft decision A/C.4/60/L.3: Question of Gibraltar

69. *Draft decision A/C.4/60/L.3 was adopted.*

Draft resolution IV: Question of New Caledonia
(A/60/23, chap. XII, sect. D)

70. *Draft resolution IV was adopted.*

Draft resolution VI: Questions of American Samoa, Anguilla, Bermuda, the British Virgin Islands, the Cayman Islands, Montserrat, Pitcairn, St. Helena, the Turks and Caicos Islands and the United States Virgin Islands (A/60/23, chap. XII, sect. F)

71. *Draft resolution VI was adopted.*

72. **Mr. Desmoures** (Argentina) recalled that, in accordance with the plan of action for the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, seminars on decolonization could be held only in the Pacific and Caribbean regions and at United Nations Headquarters. The phrase "and other venues" in the twenty-first preambular paragraph of section A of draft resolution VI was therefore inaccurate and inconsistent with the plan of action.

3. With regard to paragraph 2 of section A, his Government reiterated its full support for the right to self-determination of peoples still under colonial domination and foreign occupation, in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 1514 (XV) and 2625 (XXV). At the same time, it wished to stress that the reference to self-determination in that paragraph was restricted to the Territories mentioned in the draft resolution. Both the General Assembly and the Special Committee on Decolonization recognized that there were colonial Territories to which self-determination did not apply owing to the existence of a dispute over sovereignty. For example, in the special colonial situation in the Malvinas, the principle of territorial integrity should apply, so as to prevent any attempt to disrupt the national unity and territorial integrity of Argentina. That accorded with General Assembly resolutions 1514 (XV) and 2065 (XX), as well as subsequent resolutions on the question adopted by the General Assembly and the Special Committee.

74. **Mr. Oyarzun** (Spain) said that Spain had joined the consensus on the draft resolution, and supported the application of the principle of self-determination to the Territories included in the *annexus* resolution. At the same time, it considered that the principle of self-determination was not the only relevant principle in carrying out the decolonization of the Non-Self-Governing Territories. There were cases, such as Gibraltar, in which the principle of territorial integrity should be applied, in accordance with various resolutions of the General Assembly.

75. **Mr. Williams** (United Kingdom) said that, as in previous years, his delegation had joined the consensus

on the draft resolution, reflecting its full support for the right of self-determination as set out in Article 1, paragraph 2, of the Charter and in paragraph 4 of the Millennium Declaration. At the same time, the language used, particularly in the paragraphs referring to the United Kingdom's Overseas Territories, was inaccurate and inappropriate, and his delegation's proposed amendments had not been incorporated. His delegation would have to reconsider whether to support the resolution in future.

Draft resolution VII: Dissemination of information on decolonization (A/60/23, chap. XII, sect. G)

76. *A requested vote was taken.*

In favour:

Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Dominica, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, Gabon, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, Serbia and Montenegro, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey,

Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Yemen, Zambia.

In person:

Israel, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America.

Abstaining:

France.

73. *Draft resolution III was adopted by 142 votes to 3, with 1 abstention.*

74. **Mr. Williams** (United Kingdom) said that his Government remained of the view that the obligation placed by the draft resolution on the Secretariat to publicly decolonization issues represented an unreasonable drain on the scarce resources of the United Nations for which reason his delegation had voted against the resolution.

Draft resolution III: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (A/60/23, chap. XII, sect. II)

75. *A recorded vote was taken.*

In person:

Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belize, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Dominica, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, Gabon, Georgia, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of

Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia and Montenegro, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia.

Absent:

Israel, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America.

Abstaining:

Belgium, France, Germany.

80. *Draft resolution III was adopted by 142 votes to 3, with 1 abstention.*

81. **Mr. Williams** (United Kingdom) said that his Government continued to find some elements of the resolution unacceptable and had again voted against it. Despite having voted negatively on the current and other resolutions, the United Kingdom remained committed to modernizing its relationship with the Overseas Territories, whilst taking fully into account the views of the peoples of the Territories.

Right of reply

82. **Mr. Williams** (United Kingdom), speaking in exercise of the right of reply in relation to comments made at the current meeting by Uruguay on behalf of MERCOSUR and those made the previous day by Venezuela, and on both days by other delegations, said that the United Kingdom's position on the Falkland Islands was well known and had been laid out by the United Kingdom's Permanent Representative to the United Nations in a written right of reply to a statement made by the President of Argentina at the High-level plenary session of the General Assembly on 14 September 2005. The United Kingdom had no doubts concerning its sovereignty over the Falkland Islands, and there could be no negotiation on the matter until the residents of the islands so wished.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.



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Summary record of the 7th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 12 October 2005, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Aliyev

(Azerbaijan)

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05-54572 (E)



The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

Agenda item 26: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (continued) (A/60/23, chap. XII, sect. 3)

Draft resolution (I) on the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism (A/60/23, para. 192)

1. **The Chairman** said he had been informed that the draft resolution had no financial implications.

2. *A recorded vote was taken.*

In favour:

Algeria, Andorra, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Australia, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Bolivia, Brazil, Cambodia, Canada, China, China, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Cuba, Cyprus, Denmark, Dominica, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Haiti, Indonesia, Iraq (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Japan, Jordan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Arab Republic of, Madagascar, Maldives, Malta, Mauritania, Mexico, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, New Zealand, Nigeria, Oman, Panama, Peru, Philippines, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Singapore, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Timor-Leste, United Arab Emirates, Uruguay, Zambia.

Against:

France, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America.

Abstaining:

Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Monaco, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Ukraine.

3. *Draft resolution (II) was adopted by 72 votes in favour, 11 abstentions.*

4. **Mr. Williams** (United Kingdom) said that his delegation had again voted against the draft resolution because it believed that there was little evidence to suggest that either of the International Decades for the Eradication of Colonialism had been of any benefit to the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories. How did this seem to be an efficient use of United Nations resources. His delegation would rather work with the Special Committee on Decolonization on the questions related to specific Territories administered by the United Kingdom, with a view to their eventual removal from the Special Committee's agenda.

5. **Mr. Hunte** (Saint Lucia) said that his delegation had voted in favour of the draft resolution because it served to reiterate the call for the international community, including the wider United Nations system, to fulfil its obligations to facilitate self-determination and decolonization in the remaining Territories.

6. The Plan of Action for the second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism could be effective only if it was implemented. The insufficient level of implementation so far was not surprising given the limited human and financial resources devoted to the Plan of Action.

7. The current draft resolution and all others emanating from the Special Committee on Decolonization had been adopted after considerable discussion by the members of the Special Committee, and only after the available information on the situation on the ground in the Territories themselves had been analysed.

8. His delegation was of the view that the decolonization resolutions could be further strengthened if the administering Powers resumed formal participation in the work of the Special Committee, where many of the issues referred to in the resolutions were thoroughly discussed.

Agenda item 33: Questions relating to information (A/60/21 and A/60/73)

1. **The Chairman** said that the Committee on Information had been established in 1978 to review United Nations public information policies and activities. The increasingly widespread impact of information disseminated through various media greatly influenced most issues falling within the realm of concern for the international community.

10. Mr. Mubith (Bangladesh), Rapporteur of the Committee on Information, introducing the Committee's report on its twenty-seventh session (A/60/71), said that, with the inclusion of Cape Verde, Iceland, Luxembourg, Madagascar and Qatar, the membership of the Committee had expanded to a total of 107. The general debate during the session had included a statement by the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information, who had given a comprehensive presentation on the work and the current strategic direction of the Department of Public Information (DPI). Six reports, including a report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the operation and management of United Nations libraries, had been submitted for consideration by the Committee.

11. Speakers had focused on a wide range of issues, including the progress made by the Department through its restructuring and its new strategic direction, and the outcome of the first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society. While noting support and appreciation for the Department's work in strengthening the United Nations website in all the official languages, several speakers had expressed concern about the continuing disparity among the various official languages and called for the allocation of additional resources to achieve language parity. The new approach taken by United Nations libraries had been welcomed, but some caution had been expressed that changes in the methodology of the libraries should continue to respect the previously agreed mandate and General Assembly resolutions relevant to libraries.

12. A central focus of the general debate had been the report of the Secretary-General on the further rationalization of the network of United Nations information centres (A/AC.198/2005/3); speakers had presented diverse views on various aspects of the rationalization and regionalization process.

13. The Committee's report also dealt with strategic communications services and news services, the role of the Department of Public Information in United Nations peacekeeping and in strengthening dialogue among civilizations and the culture of peace as a means of enhancing understanding among nations, library services, and outreach. In the final remarks, the Committee requested the Secretary-General to report to the next session of the Committee and to the sixtyeth session of the General Assembly on the activities of the Department.

14. Mr. Motar (Romania), Chairman of the Committee on Information, commended the Department of Public Information, under the leadership of the Under-Secretary-General, for having met the challenge of effectively and creatively communicating information on the 2005 World Summit process and Outcome to the world.

15. The general debate during the twenty-seventh session of the Committee on Information had demonstrated that there was broad agreement that the reorganization and restructuring of DPI had resulted in a renewed and more effective Department. Its new strategy had given it a sharper focus and empowered it with innovative tools, and the introduction and extensive use of new technologies had made it more effective by widening its reach to audiences. It was gratifying to note that these changes had not come at the expense of the traditional means of communication.

16. Much remained to be done, however. A major task ahead for the Department was to serve as the public voice of an Organization that had been created 60 years previously as the public voice of the world. Meeting that goal demanded both a solid plan and sound leadership, as well as the continued support of Member States and the most effective use of the resources allocated. The people of the world increasingly looked up to the United Nations as a symbol of hope. The Organization represented a collective tool for responding to common concerns.

17. Mr. Tharoor (Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information) highlighted some of the Department's most recent endeavours, focusing on the 2005 World Summit. Although the initial response by media commentators to the World Summit had not been enthusiastic, the tone had gradually improved as the public had become better informed. The Outcome of the Summit not only contained language that affirmed the importance of the multilateral system, but also included clear commitments on the precise steps needed to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, and agreements to create a Peacebuilding Commission and a Human Rights Council. Most significantly, the doctrine of the responsibility to protect had now been unambiguously accepted by all Member States.

18. He pointed out that reform had been on the United Nations agenda since the Organization had first been established. Each phase of reform had improved

the ability of the United Nations to respond to an evolving mosaic of demands, priorities and initiatives on the part of the Member States and public constituencies. Members of the Committee on Information were acutely aware that the global media environment and the rapid pace of technological advances posed a challenge to communicators. The process of reorientation launched by the Secretary-General three years earlier had fundamentally changed the way in which the Department defined and carried out its mission and the changes had resulted in the establishment of clear strategic directions, the results of which had been enthusiastically welcomed by Member States.

19. The report of the Secretary-General on questions relating to information (A/60/173) provided an overview of the results achieved through the reform efforts over the previous three years. The promotion of the World Summit had been driven by strategic planning, better use of new information and communication technologies, closer system-wide coordination, and proactive outreach. Coordinated efforts had been made to raise the awareness of the media as part of a comprehensive campaign at United Nations Headquarters with the active involvement of the Secretary-General and other officials, at the local level by the network of United Nations information centres, and through personal contact with media professionals. A number of interviews and background briefings by senior United Nations officials around the world on the full range of topics discussed at the Summit had encouraged journalists to appreciate the importance of the issues that had been addressed. Maximum use had been made of contacts and the capacities of the network of information centres, which, in the lead up to the Summit, had organized media campaigns, workshops and special events. All those activities had served to ensure that the attention of the world's media had been firmly on the United Nations when the Heads of State and Government had arrived, and that that attention had been at a maximum: well-informed, if not always fully convinced.

20. When the Summit had actually commenced, it had been the Department's responsibility to manage the more than 3,500 accredited journalists who had covered it. The Department had also recognized the importance of keeping civil society constructively engaged in the process, and the fifty-eighth Annual DPI/NGO Conference, held from 7 to 9 September, had

taken reform of the international system as its theme, under the title "Our Challenge: Voices for Peace, Partnerships and Renewal". In the week preceding the Summit, more than 2,500 representatives of non-governmental organizations and other civil society partners had come to Headquarters, and even more had followed the proceedings over the Internet. The Conference had allowed the Department to capitalize on the commitment of civil society to the Summit, engendered by the civil society hearings held by the President of the General Assembly, for which the Department of Public Information had also provided essential support.

21. The increasing power of the United Nations website as an information tool had figured prominently in the Summit story: during the three days of the Summit, the website had been accessed some 45 million times — compared to 42 million hits during the entire year in 1997. More than 150,000 viewers from 174 countries had watched the webcast of the Summit live, and a further 722,236 had used the Department's "webcast on-demand" capacity to watch it over the following days. And for the first time, DPI had been able to provide audiences with the option to watch the live webcast — in all languages — in either the original language or interpreted into English.

22. People around the world — people who in the past would perhaps have glimpsed only snatches of the fleeting all their evening news programmes — had come to via the Web to watch Heads of State and Government address the United Nations, and collectively had watched the Summit live for some 18,700 hours. From the webcast archives, they had then watched for more than three times that number of hours.

23. Those figures indicated three things. First, that the website was an essential tool that allowed DPI to reach global audiences quickly and cost-effectively. Second, that it was being used by people in more than two thirds of Member States, with the result that, unlike in the past, its value now extended far beyond the developed world. And third, that people really wanted to know what was happening at the United Nations, and would tune in if the Organization could find ways to allow them to do so. The figures also indicated that the Department's pre-Summit communication strategy had been effective.

24. After the conclusion of the summit, the United Nations information groups, which had been well briefed and so engaged in the pre-summit process, had been able quickly to transmit a synopsis of the Outcome, often in local languages, and explain to the local media the finer points of the agreements that had been reached.

25. The level of interest in the Summit, along with other indicators, suggested that public support for the United Nations was slowly improving from the slump that had followed the disappointment in the Security Council over Iraq. The surveys conducted in the aftermath of that dispute had shown confidence in the Organization to be at an all-time low, even in countries where support for the United Nations had traditionally been very high. A new poll conducted by the German Marshall Fund in June 2003 among adults in the United States and Europe indicated that strong majorities in both places held a "very favourable" or "mostly favourable" opinion of the United Nations. Three quarters of Europeans and a majority of Americans considered the United Nations better able to manage many of the world's most pressing problems than any single country.

26. The results of that survey were particularly striking when it was considered that, in some parts of the world, the media continued to pay little attention to global and humanitarian issues. As part of its efforts to counter that trend, in 2004 the Department had launched a new initiative called "Ten Stories the World Should Hear More About", which was specifically designed to bring into focus important stories that had somehow escaped the attention of news organizations. That initiative, now in its second year, had helped to draw the attention of journalists to stories like the crisis in Northern Uganda, or the continuing violence worldwide against women. The Department had also made those neglected stories priorities for its own video and radio programming, and it was now providing footage on them, from the field, to television and radio broadcasters around the world, further raising the profile of the issues.

27. In a speech in May 2003, the Secretary-General had called the United Nations a work in progress. If a healthy and strong Organization was to be passed on to future generations, he had said, it was important to ensure that the United Nations moved with the times. With the decision of the 2005 World Summit, a new phase of United Nations renewal was now under way,

and, with help and support from Member States, the Department of Public Information – the public voice of the United Nations – would continue to evolve and to play an important part in that process.

28. **The Chairman** said that the Committee would now hold an interactive dialogue on the agenda item and then proceed to the general debate. He invited members to put questions to the Under-Secretary-General.

29. **Mr. Suárez Salvia** (Argentina) said that the organizing facilities for the press at the Summit must have been a major challenge for the Department, and he congratulated the Under-Secretary-General on the results. On the basis of that experience, he asked whether DPI might consider the possibility of greater involvement of the Press Attaches of the Permanent Missions during the run-up to the sixty-first session of the General Assembly.

30. While the organization of the Summit had undeniably been generally good, there had been room for improvement in the handling of the press accompanying each world leader during the few hours that they had been present in the United Nations building. Greater flexibility was needed in providing access for the official accredited press and media. One possibility might be to issue them with a special pass for the General Assembly Hall.

31. **Mr. Tharoor** (Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information) said that he was intrigued by the idea of associating the Press Attaches of the Permanent Missions with the Department's work before the following year's session. The modalities of exactly how that might work would have to be explored. One essential first step would be to make an inventory of how many Missions would be in a position to have a dedicated Press Attaché who could work with the Department in the lead-up to the General Assembly session. With regard to the idea of special passes, he said that, too, would need to be looked into, in particular as the idea entailed some security considerations. He would have the News and Media Division examine the two ideas further.

32. **Ms. Yan Jiarong** (China) expressed satisfaction with all of the arrangements made, and the information given, by DPI prior to and during the World Summit. She supported the suggestion of the representative of Argentina concerning a special General Assembly credential to be issued to official media

representatives. Secondly, noting that both the Secretary-General and the Under-Secretary-General, as well as other senior United Nations officials, had recently written articles that had appeared in leading publications, she asked whether there were any statistics on how many articles had been written and to which publications they had been sent. She also asked how many interviews had been given, particularly to mainstream United States media. Remarking that much of the work of press officers involved writing articles, she said it was regrettable that in many cases such articles were never published, and asked whether there was some particular secret for success.

33. **Mr. Tharoor** (Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information) said that the Secretary-General had written one article specifically relating to the Summit, which had been placed around the world after its original publication in English. The United Nations information centres had offered the piece to many outlets, and it had ultimately appeared in 43 countries. The Department found that the information centres enjoyed an almost 100 per cent placement rate, in the sense that they would virtually always be able to place an article in at least one publication in the countries in which they were based. In order not to overburden the information centres, he had sent his own article to a syndicate and, at no cost to the United Nations, it had finally appeared in some 17 different languages around the world.

34. As for interviews, the Secretary-General had been extremely busy during the Summit, receiving Heads of State and Government on a bilateral basis, and he had therefore been unable to give many interviews. On the other hand, a number of senior officials, including himself, had done so. He had probably handled 15 or 16 interviews a day. He welcomed the interest of journalists, and was always ready to address them individually or in groups. The Department was now carrying out a detailed assessment of the media outreach during the Summit, and would circulate more accurate figures once they became available.

35. **Mr. Adam** (Israel), referring to the United Nations television channel, which his delegation found very important and useful, he asked whether any data were available on the rating of the channel around the world.

36. **Mr. Tharoor** (Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information) explained

that there was, in fact, a United Nations television channel, although it was a common misconception that nothing existed. In fact, Time Warner and others made a possible free-of-charge, multi-lingual effort to put its regular live feed onto one channel, although the broadcast reached only a very limited range in midtown Manhattan. The expense of running a television channel would easily exceed the Department's entire budget. What DPI did do, on the other hand, was to provide the live feed – again free of charge – for all of the Organization's relevant events. That feed was picked up worldwide. A recent innovation was UNIFEED, which every day provided news from the United Nations and items received from United Nations cameras around the world in a free package which was uploaded and available for download by television stations around the globe. The Department did produce some pre-packaged television programmes, such as "World Chronicle", in which a journalist or group of journalists interviewed a senior United Nations official or a senior Government official visiting Headquarters.

37. **Mr. Ali Ahmad** (Syrian Arab Republic) enquired about the Department's latest information tool on global issues for use by media organizations throughout the world.

38. Referring to proposals to abolish the Fourth Committee, he said that they completely disregarded the Committee's very serious work with respect to decolonization, particularly in the context of the International Decades for the Eradication of Colonialism. If the Committee adopted seemingly redundant resolutions year after year, it was only because those resolutions were never implemented. He asked how the Department of Public Information viewed the role of the Committee and whether it believed that, even if reforms were to ensue, the Committee still served a purpose.

39. **Mr. Tharoor** (Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information) replied that the criteria followed for the Ten Stories initiative were very simple. The Department contacted every single United Nations department, fund, programme, or agency to ask what stories or issues in its area of work were not getting the desired media attention. The recommendations were collected (in 2004 there had been about 60 of them), and a committee reduced them to 10, bearing in mind two elements. First, DPI wanted to pick stories that did not already have much media

... (they might) issues that were considered important, but if they were already receiving adequate coverage, they would not make it onto the list. *First*, Second, it had to consider whether the story would attract the interest of the media; the Department could always explain why something was important for the world to know, but if it failed to convince a journalist that the story was worth writing or broadcasting, then it was wasting its time.

40. On the second question, relating to the reform of the Fourth Committee, he said that DPI had taken no position on the matter. It was delighted to work with delegations in the Committee on Information and found it very helpful to use an autumn meeting of that Committee as an opportunity to update delegations on the previous six months' work.

41. With regard to the wider issue of how the Department publicized reform issues, he wished to stress that it was the job of DPI to publicize the decisions taken by Member States, and until those decisions were taken the Department did not take a position. Only when the Secretary-General put forward a formal reform proposal was it the duty of DPI to publicize it, just as it also publicized the Secretary-General's reports to the legislative bodies.

42. Ms. El Aoufi (Morocco) asked for an update on the situation of the information centres. Following the publication of the Secretary-General's report entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change" (A/57/387 and Corr.1), the approach had been re-evaluated and adjusted. The matter was referred to in draft resolution B in the report of the Committee on Information on its twenty-seventh session (A/60/21), and she wished to understand clearly what the situation was.

43. Mr. Tharoor (Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information) explained that, while the plan for the rationalization of the United Nations information centres had been on the table for a couple of years, the Department had not had sufficient resources to fully implement the regionalization plan as outlined in the previous year's report of the Secretary-General (A/AC.198/2004/3). While that was a sensitive issue for some delegations, the problem had been exacerbated by the General Assembly's decision to reduce the overall allocation for United Nations information centres by \$2 million in the current biennium; that reduction represented over 20 per cent

of the operating costs of the entire network of field centres. The Department therefore had had fewer resources than had been anticipated when the original regionalization plan had been submitted.

44. Moreover, the experience with the Brussels-based regionalization had shown that there were many unanticipated costs attached to closing information centres on such a large scale and establishing a working hub. There had also been a significant increase in travel costs that had not been realistically budgeted for. Closing offices was not an easy proposition, nor was regrouping them into regional hubs. The closure of a comparable number of United Nations information centres in developing countries was neither politically viable nor cost-effective, as many of the centres were housed in rent-free premises provided by the Government concerned. Moreover, in many developing countries, outreach in the traditional media, particularly in the local languages, relied on a continued presence on the ground. As a result of those financial and political realities, the current year's report of the Secretary-General (A/AC.198/2005/1) outlined a recalibration of the plan, which envisaged not a physical rationalization of the network of information centres but a rationalization of the way they worked together, with greater horizontal cooperation among them and a more strategic approach to communications in the field.

45. Since the twenty-seventh session of the Committee on Information, the plan for further rationalization of the information centres had been refined on the basis of feedback from Member States. Resources were being realigned with a view to strengthening the effectiveness of the network, as outlined in the latest report of the Secretary-General (A/AC.198/2005/2), and the role of national information officers was being reviewed. The Department was investing in information technology in order to achieve longer-term efficiencies and was continuing to seek extrabudgetary resources, as well as heavily subsidized or rent-free premises for its field offices. With the assistance of the communications professionals in its field offices, the Department's new regional civilian communication model was being more fully implemented. In an effort to improve its internal communication system, it was briefing the information centres on all issues, from the 2005 World Summit to oil for food, and providing them with the necessary information to function independently and to

be proactive in their outreach to the media and civil society. It was also attempting to familiarize them with the rules and procedures of the United Nations.

46. Also, since the twenty-seventh session of the Committee on Information, the Department had been assigned responsibility for the new internal communications unit with a mandate to transform the Intranet into a powerful information tool that would at the same time increase transparency and accountability. Regrettably, there were some serious technical shortcomings in the field. Not all the information centres could be connected to the Intranet, owing to the costs involved, and the Department was addressing that problem on a priority basis. In the meantime, a password-protected Internet-based civilian communication network, developed since the latest session of the Committee on Information, linked field offices with Headquarters and served as an internal communications forum and reference tool. Nearly three quarters of the respondents in a rough internal Department survey had indicated that, in the two months since it had been launched, they had used the network daily to access information on the Summit. Increasingly, there were signs of a better team spirit throughout the Department and greater cohesiveness of its messages at all levels.

47. The Department was also attempting to improve regional cooperation among the information centres. For example, with a generous grant from the United Nations Foundation, it had organized a workshop in Nairobi in June for information staff from 16 centres in sub-Saharan Africa. Many of the conclusions reached at that workshop had had a significant impact on the work of other centres in Africa and elsewhere. Information centre websites were being created as an alternative to regional hubs, especially in locations where connectivity was a problem, and information centres were encouraged to coordinate their outreach activities at the regional level. For example, the third issue of a new bi-monthly regional newsletter, with readership in West and Central Africa, had just been issued by the Dakar information centre. The Department's regional approach to promoting the Summit had increased its effectiveness.

48. In sum, the Department's activities had been marked by greater regional cooperation, greater effectiveness in the use of information technology and better management of limited resources. The Department lacked the resources to replace obsolete technology in some of the information centres

equipped with 10-year-old computers, its resources had been cut in the previous two budget cycles.

49. **Ms. Miller** (Jamaica) enquired about the impact of the new strategic approach on the staffing and resources of the information centres, and about webcasts on the World Summit on the Information Society and about plans to modernize the Department's equipment at Headquarters. She asked how interested countries could access UNIFEED.

50. **Mr. Tharoor** (Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information) said that scarce resources, particularly in the previous two budget cycles, were a common thread running through all the issues that had been raised. It was true that some of the equipment at Headquarters was outdated and that even successful ventures, such as the United Nations Library programmes, could not be further developed for lack of capacity. Indeed, the McKinsey consultants who had carried out an assessment at the beginning of the reform exercise had been astonished at the Department's productivity on such a restricted budget. Still, its critics continued to claim that it was overstaffed and overfunded. In the end, the Member States would have to resign themselves to getting what they paid for.

51. Under the reallocation of resources exercise in 2002, he had reassigned a number of D-1 posts that had hitherto been disproportionately concentrated in Europe to information centres in South Africa, Cairo, Tokyo and Delhi. The United Nations Environment Programme in Nairobi had also upgraded its communications director to the D-1 level. There were too few General Service posts, however, to be moved around. The Department and Jamaica had hoped to extend outreach in the Caribbean region by assigning a national, or even an international, information officer to the regional office in Port-of-Spain, the Department had requested assistance from the host Government of Trinidad and Tobago in reducing the very high rent it paid for its regional office premises and it would re-evaluate the fate of its activities in that region depending on the reply.

52. Turning to the question about UNIFEED, he said that, in the next few months, world news downloaded from the Associated Press Television News network would be available on the Department's website for the benefit of countries that could not afford to subscribe to the service directly.

53. New equipment would not be installed at Headquarters until it was determined whether the final version of the Capital Master Plan would involve a relocation of staff.

54. **Mr. Coelho Ferreira** (Portugal) said that the Regional United Nations Information Centre in Brussels had been largely responsible for the rousing reception given to the Secretary-General on his three-day visit to Portugal and that, in the space of one year, it had accomplished all its goals with respect to the Portuguese-speaking community. He enquired about the prospects of establishing a regional hub in Luanda to serve Africa's five Portuguese-speaking countries.

55. Welcoming the announcement about upcoming Associated Press Television News services, he suggested supplementing television with a strengthened radio network, which would reach a much wider audience. Perhaps the current 15-minute daily live radio broadcasts could be extended.

56. **Mr. Tharoor** (Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information) said that the Department was deeply grateful to the Government of Angola for its generous offer to provide rent-free premises for an information centre in Luanda to serve the five Portuguese-speaking African countries (Angola, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique and São Tomé and Príncipe). Unfortunately, even with rent-free premises, the operating costs of an information centre in Luanda would be prohibitive. The desk officer for Portugal at the Regional United Nations Information Centre for Western Europe was currently translating the Department's products for lusophone countries in Africa.

57. As for live radio, the Department was carrying out significant outreach activities with very limited resources. Although the United Nations did not have its own radio or television stations, it was currently offering 15 minutes of live feed and providing other materials to radio stations. Live broadcasts from the United Nations were aired on over 187 radio stations in 76 countries in a variety of languages. The Department had formed strong partnerships with three of the most popular radio stations in Brazil, reaching 15 million, 30 million and 10 million listeners on *Rádios Banderantes*, *Rádio Nacional do Brasil* (*Rádio bras*) and *Íbervem*, Pam, respectively. Its special news programmes for the Portuguese-speaking African countries were transmitted by e-mail or by telephone

feed. It also provided material to national radio stations in those countries, to *Rádio e Televisão de Portugal* (RTP) in Portugal, which had a wide audience in the lusophone diaspora, and to the Portuguese service of the British Broadcasting Company (BBC).

58. **Mr. Tanon-Boutchoe** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that publicity for the Summit had focused largely on the reform of the Security Council and the Commission on Human Rights rather than on the everyday problems confronting African citizens, such as poverty, debt and HIV/AIDS. For Africans, the tangible results of the 2005 World Summit, with regard to both reform and development, had been sorely disappointing.

59. **Mr. Tharoor** (Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information) replied that reform efforts had made headlines because of the media's belief that debt and other development issues had already been covered at the recent Group of Eight Summit. He pointed out, however, that, in his report, the Secretary-General considered the impact of reform on development, and that, indeed, 60 per cent of the World Summit Outcome dealt with development issues. The publicity for the Summit had changed the image of the United Nations, which had been tarnished by the oil-for-food controversy in the months leading up to it.

60. **Mr. Gallardo** (Peru) agreed that coverage of reform had overshadowed coverage of development issues. The Department must now consider how it would publicize efforts to implement reform, and how it would portray the gap between objectives and reality, in view of the lag in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. He sought confirmation that the Department was interested in creating regional and subregional networks to accommodate the particular needs of countries, and wondered about the response to offers by the Permanent Missions to secure media contacts to publicize the work of the United Nations over the past 60 years.

61. **Ms. Kamboj** (India) expressed great disappointment that a lack of resources had made it impossible to run the information centres as originally envisaged. Her delegation strongly supported the Department's efforts to make optimal use of the resources available to it and looked forward to further discussion of the issue at the twenty-eighth session of the Committee on Information.

62. **Mr. Diaz** (Spain) welcomed the Organization's improved image and its multilingual webcasts. He thanked the Department, in particular, for organizing an Internet course and for designing a web page in the Spanish language, that had given rise to a Hispanic Forum that included 27 countries.

63. **Ms. Davis** (Antigua and Barbuda) requested additional details on partnerships with educational institutions within the context of the Department's new strategic approach to improving its work.

64. **Mr. Alberto** (Angola) wondered whether the Department of Public Information was truly committed to requesting funding for an information centre in Luanda in its budget submission to the Fifth Committee. Such a centre must be opened in order to meet the needs of the Portuguese-speaking countries in Africa, they should not be penalized by the lack of services in their language, which was spoken by many millions of people across the world. His delegation and the delegations of the other Portuguese-speaking countries in Africa would do everything possible in the Fifth Committee to ensure that resources were allocated to fund a Portuguese-language information centre in Luanda.

65. **Mr. Idoko** (Nigeria) said that, during his youth, information about the United Nations had been available even in the most remote parts of the country; that, sadly, was no longer the case. The services of the Department of Public Information continued to be the first contact for information about the United Nations for many people in the world and he expressed great concern that its budget continued to be cut.

66. **Mr. Tharoor** (Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information) said that the Department would continue to work with the New York-based press to disseminate information about successes and failures on the part of the General Assembly and Member States in following up the 2005 World Summit Outcome. Information about the Millennium Development Goals was also a priority: a chart, which would be constantly updated, had been developed to show progress towards meeting each goal and target broken down by region and level of attainment.

67. Cooperation with academic institutions had been strengthened: educational outreach was continuing and agreements had been entered into with six universities to grant them quasi-non-governmental organization

status and deepen the partnership with them; courses about the United Nations had been organized at the City University of New York; and discussions were being held with the International Association of University Presidents on modalities for developing the relationship between universities, the Department and the United Nations. He also cited the example of a videoconferencing arrangement undertaken with Fairleigh Dickinson University in New Jersey, whereby United Nations programming could be shared with other university campuses. That initiative could perhaps be developed with a view to worldwide distribution.

68. The Department's position with regard to the United Nations information centres had indeed changed; the objective was to make better use of the scarce resources in order to create regional cooperation and synergies without, however, moving towards regionalization, which the Department could not afford. The role and work of the information centres would continue to be assessed and modified as needed. In that context, he said that the assessment of the Regional United Nations Information Centre in Brussels should be completed by the end of 2005 and a report submitted to the Committee on Information in 2006. The assessment would include not only a cost-benefit analysis but also an analysis of how to be innovative and achieve better results in terms of both activities and the impact of those activities. He thanked the Governments of Spain, Belgium, Portugal, France, Germany and Italy for the additional contributions they had made to the Department's activities. He regretted the need to request additional assistance from States but said that at least the costs of the reorganization of the Department's services in Europe — thanks to those additional resources provided by the developed countries — would not affect programmes in the developing countries.

69. The Department was committed to the concept of a Portuguese-language information centre in Luanda, and he noted with thanks the generous offer of rent-free premises made by the Government of Angola. It would certainly be possible to transfer a professional-level post to Luanda to act as coordinator and to create a cooperation network with the Portuguese desk office in Brussels and the information centre in Rio de Janeiro. What was lacking, however, was funding for infrastructure and operating costs, such as communications, technology and travel. Unfortunately

no funding was available. He pointed out that funding for information centres had been reduced by 20 per cent.

70. The Department of Public Information did not make a separate budget request to the Fifth Committee, but was included in the Secretariat's overall budget submission. Governments were, of course, free to encourage the Fifth Committee to mandate the establishment of a Portuguese-language centre; if that was agreed, resources would have to be found. He pointed out that the General Assembly had only called for the funding of a Portuguese-language information centre within existing resources. The issue was therefore in the hands of Member States. If they were able to move forward in that regard, his Department would be only too happy.

71. He hoped that the interactive dialogue had helped to give the Committee a better understanding of the opportunities for the dissemination of information about the United Nations, as well as the limitations on the Department. It was important to communicate to the world the message that the Organization could help to make it a better place. That would require increased outreach efforts. He noted that, like many Member States, the United Nations was faced with the challenge of carrying out public diplomacy. He was encouraged by the expressions of support and understanding on the part of Committee members.

72. **The Chairman** enquired about the Department's activities aimed at encouraging dialogue among countries and civilizations.

73. **Mr. Tharoor** (Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information) said that the Department disseminated information about every issue on which the General Assembly had taken a position. Some issues required specific resources. Some, such as those related to the dialogue among civilizations, were simply added to those dealt with by the Department, which used its own creativity, within existing resources, to promote issues related to the dialogue among civilizations. That had led, for example, to the development of the seminar series "Unlearning Intolerance", and to the organization of the first seminars on anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. With regard to the alliance of civilizations, a noble initiative put forward by the Governments of Spain and Turkey, the Department had made the relevant announcements, there was a special adviser on that

topic, but the Department would certainly assist in any way it could. As for the culture of peace, his Department focused on the observance of the International Day of Peace.

74. **The Chairman** said that the interactive dialogue had provided a valuable opportunity to discuss important issues such as the need to ensure that the Department of Public Information was allocated sufficient resources to fulfil its mandate. He suggested that the Secretariat and the Department of Public Information should consider the possibility of providing a forum, for example a web page, through which Permanent Missions could submit questions to the Secretariat with a view to promoting better communication between the Missions and the Secretariat.

75. He thanked the Under-Secretary-General for his most informative responses. The Committee would now proceed to the general debate on the item.

76. **Ms. Laohaphan** (Thailand), speaking on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), expressed support for the Department of Public Information's efforts to enhance communications between the United Nations and the public, which was a key goal of the Secretary-General's reform proposals. The Bangkok-based United Nations Information Services played a pivotal role in that regard and should be provided with the necessary resources to expand its outreach activities in the region.

77. An organization's success depended not only upon its work but also on perceptions of its work; that was especially true for the United Nations, the world body with the highest public profile. It therefore needed a well-defined communications strategy to be effective in reaching out to the widest possible audience with a view to increasing people's awareness of its relevance to their lives. She commended the role played by the Department in disseminating information about the activities of the United Nations, but stressed that outreach and dissemination of information were only the starting point. Further strategies were needed to enhance people's understanding of the role of the Organization in maintaining international peace and security and promoting human rights and development. Information must be seen to be useful and valuable to those receiving it. The Department should therefore integrate a culture of evaluation which would cover

both access and awareness. That would ensure an accurate assessment of the Department's overall performance.

78. Reform of the Department of Public Information had contributed to the process of renewal and reform of the United Nations. The Department had played a significant role in increasing awareness in the world about the recent High-level Plenary Meeting. The real challenge, however, lay in ensuring that the general public in every country continued to be well informed on progress towards the implementation of the Outcome of the High-level Plenary Meeting.

79. It was important that the United Nations Communication Group should further enhance cooperation and coordination between the Department of Public Information and other agencies, including the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Political Affairs, in order to strengthen the public information component of peacekeeping missions and develop strategies to address the issue of sexual exploitation and abuse during peacekeeping operations.

80. In the context of the rationalization of United Nations information centres and the re-calibration of the earlier plan to emphasize a more regional approach at the country level, she said that integrated communication activities on priority thematic issues that resonated with local audiences warranted support. The Department of Public Information should undertake consultations with concerned countries in which information centres were located and with the countries served by those centres and other interested countries in the region in order to reflect the distinctive characteristics of each region.

81. While she welcomed the Department's efforts to utilize advanced communication technologies, she pointed out that many parts of the world still relied on the use of a simple radio. In that regard, she noted that the digital divide between developed and developing countries continued to widen. The Department should continue its efforts to close both that digital divide and the communication gap between the United Nations and the public at large. She hoped that the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society, to be held in Tunis in November 2005, would develop tangible solutions for narrowing the digital divide.

82. Speaking as the representative of Thailand, she informed members of the Committee that her

delegation had applied for membership of the Committee on Information. Her delegation attached great importance to the work of that Committee. Information was a powerful tool for peace, security, development and understanding among the peoples of the world. It was her fervent hope that the members of the Committee on Information would support her delegation's application.

83. **Mr. Suárez Salvia** (Argentina), speaking on behalf of the Rio Group, expressed support for the draft resolutions contained in the report of the Committee on Information (A/60/21). He stressed the importance of the work of the Department of Public Information in disseminating information about the United Nations, which was often not available from the commercial media, and welcomed the Department's efforts to improve the image of the United Nations and counter the negative effect of recent scandals. The Millennium Development Goals Report 2005 was a good example of the use by the Secretariat of available resources to transmit a coherent message to non-governmental organizations, civil society, the private sector and universities. Free public access to the official document system would also be a positive step.

84. The Department of Public Information had become a more effective messenger in making people aware of the importance of the work of the Organization, that had strengthened the latter's relationship with civil society and the public and private sectors. The Department was to be commended for using new means of communication while at the same time continuing to improve its use of traditional means. He noted the emphasis on strategic communications services, whereby certain information centres would have increased programming functions and support other offices in their region. It was important, however, that that strategy should include consultation with the Member States concerned and not lead to the closing of information centres but rather to the enhanced effectiveness of existing centres. The rationalization process did not in any way imply the closing of information centres. The regionalization process, as initially put forward, had been rejected. The Rio Group nevertheless supported careful study, in consultation with Member States, of any reforms aimed at improving United Nations public information and communications services.

85. Information should be available in all the official languages. It was regrettable that no real progress had

been made towards achieving parity of languages in budgetary allocations, in particular with regard to the Organization's website, the increasing use of which made it important to ensure that all documentation was available in the six official languages. In spite of the limited resources available, the Spanish-language website was experiencing one of the greatest increases in usage and the efforts of those responsible for that website should be commended. The United Nations website should likewise be accessible to persons with disabilities and the Department of Public Information should continue to stress with its various offices the need to provide information in a format accessible to persons with disabilities.

86. Traditional means of communication, such as radio and television, continued to be an effective means of disseminating information, in particular in many regions of the developing countries where access to advanced technology was still limited. In that connection, he acknowledged the daily news programme of the United Nations radio service in Spanish which, with 174 radio partners in 75 countries, provided information about the Organization to every corner of the world.

87. He expressed support for the development of the United Nations libraries in order to make them better equipped to meet requests from users for information. In order to improve the dissemination of information about the work of the General Assembly, it was important to maintain coordination between the Department of Public Information and the Office of the President of the General Assembly, and between the Spokesperson for the President of the General Assembly and the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General. Finally, the Rio Group noted with interest the cooperation between the Department of Public Information and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations with regard to the dissemination of information about the Organization's peacekeeping activities.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.